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Sophocles

THE
TRAGEDIES OF SOPHOCLES

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TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY THE REV. THE
TRAGEDIES OF SOPHOCLES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON

J. N. RICHARDSON, CORNHILL.

PRINTED BY J. N. RICHARDSON, CORNHILL.

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OF ETON COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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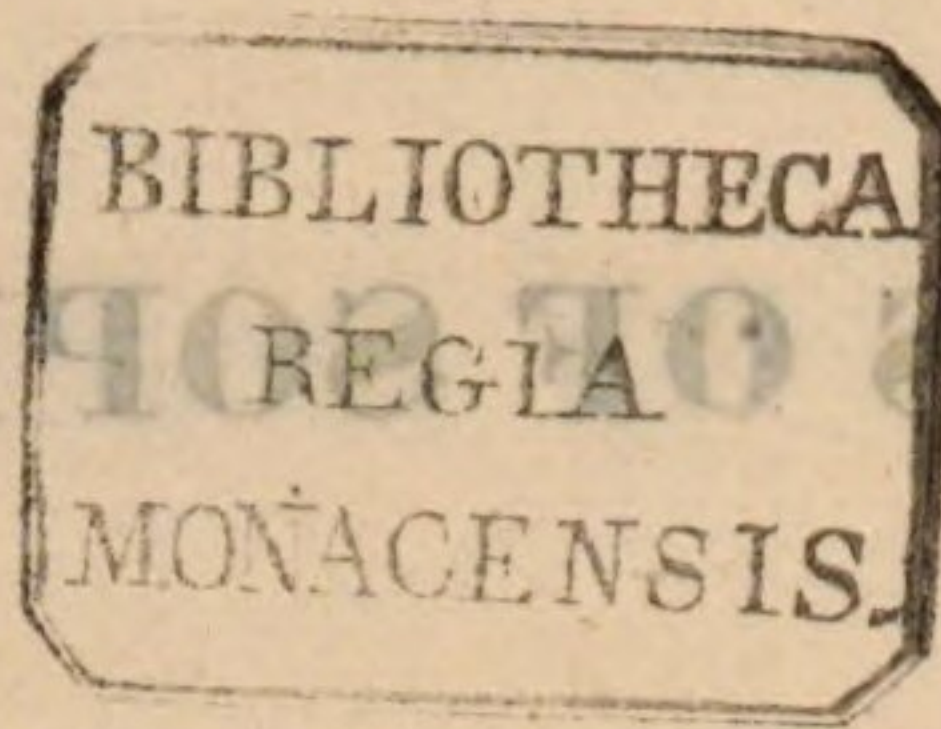
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TRACHINÆ.

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It has been remarked by Aristotle, that Trachinus
painted more greatly than they can be. Trachinus
such as they ought to be, and Trachinus such as
they are. This is a remark, though most applicable
and appropriate in reference to those characters of
the dramas of Trachinus which are strictly human
personages, cannot in justice be extended either to
his fiction or his history. Trachinus, in the fol-
lowing tragedy, constitutes a individual specimen
of the heroic character, as Minerva, in the Ajax
personifies of the divine. The son of Ajax, in the
standing, his central position and dominant ex-
istence.

TRACHINIÆ.

It has been remarked by Aristotle, that Æschylus painted men greater than they can be, Sophocles such as they ought to be, and Euripides such as they are. This encomium, though most applicable and appropriate in reference to those characters of the dramas of Sophocles which are strictly *human* personages, cannot in justice be extended either to his Heroes or his Deities. Hercules, in the following tragedy, constitutes as indifferent a specimen of the heroic character as Minerva, in the Ajax, presents of the divine. The son of Jove, notwithstanding his celestial extraction and destined exal-

tation, is represented to us as enslaved by the most abject and degrading of all human weaknesses. He is indeed a practical exemplification of the Anacreontic sentiment,

..... κάλλος

Ἄντ' ἀσπίδων ἀπασῶν,

Ἄντ' ἐγχείων ἀπάντων.

and unites to the most abandoned licentiousness the qualities of gross intemperance and unrelenting cruelty; for no greater provocation than because a father had refused to deliver up his daughter to the secret embraces of a brutal violator, this favourite of Heaven, this scourge of tyrants and oppressors, invades an unoffending state, levels its capital with the dust, slays its monarch, and consigns its inhabitants to a miserable captivity. Reserving for the most infamous purposes the daughter of the King whom he has murdered, he insults his father Jove by offering at his shrine the trophies of successful villany. Such is a true portrait of the most celebrated hero of ancient mythology; and such a delineation may well convince us, that the bard, who could duly appreciate the excellen-

cies of the human character, was utterly unable to estimate the perfections of the divine.

Yet it is not intended, by these observations, to impeach either the judgement or the discretion of the poet. The gross and glaring defects of this drama are attributable, not to the writer, but to the age. Whatever abstract opinion the genius of Sophocles might have formed respecting the character of a hero, he would be compelled, in the delineation of an individual personage, to consider the prejudices and prepossessions of his audience. The Athenians, who knew what was right, would gladly plead the example of their heroes and divinities, to excuse them from practising it. And, whatever may be asserted to the contrary by the admirers of antiquity, it is an irrefutable fact, that with all the refinement and elegance of Athens was mingled, even at the most flourishing period of its existence, a degree of barbarism almost inconceivable.

Leaving these remarks, which are perhaps somewhat irrelevant, let us descend from the hero to the woman, from the licentious and implacable Her-

cules to the chaste and affectionate Deianira, and we shall again recognise, in all its vigour and beauty, the transcendant genius of Sophocles. Here, at least, all is natural, becoming, and consistent. The lively exultation of the unhappy Queen at the intelligence of her Lord's triumph, and the promise of his return ;—that mournful presage of the instability of all human transport, which is so exquisitely represented as stealing over her at the sight of the unhappy captives ;—her generous compassion for Iole's sorrows, so well preparing us to sympathise with her own ;—the hurried agony in which she resolves on sending the fatal robe ;—her swift repentance and anxious alarm ;—the utter anguish in which she listens to the reproaches of her son, describing his father's sufferings ;—the silent desperation with which she rushes to the bridal couch, there to expiate her unconscious crime by a violent death ;—in all these we discern the hand of a master, and forget the deficiencies of other characters in contemplating the excellence of this. On the whole, this drama, if it does not exalt the reputation of Sophocles, would have crowned a meaner poet with immortality.

The chorus is composed of Trachinian virgins. The scene is at Trachis, in Thessaly, whither Hercules had retired after the unintentional murder of his relative, the grandson of Æneus.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

TRACHINÆ.

DIANIRA.

ATTENDANT.

HYLUS.

CHORUS OF TRACHINIAN VIRGINS.

TRACHINIAN, OR MESSENGER.

ISCHAS.

MATRON, OR NURSE.

OLD MAN, ATTENDANT ON HERCULES.

HERCULES.

The chorus is composed of Trachinian virgins.
The scene is at Trachis, in Thessaly, whither Her-
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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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TRACHINIAN, OR MESSENGER.

LICHAS.

MATRON, OR NURSE.

OLD MAN, ATTENDANT ON HERCULES.

HERCULES.

TRACHINIÆ.

DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT.

Dei. 'Tis an old adage, and of all approved,
That never canst thou learn, if man's brief date
Be blest or wretched, till by death fulfilled ;
Yet, ere the grave enshroud me, well I know
How dreary and unblest hath been mine own.
When in the palace of my sire I dwelt
At Pleuron, if of all th' Ætolian maids
One feared detested nuptials, 'twas myself.
My suitor was the River-God—I speak
Of Achelöus—who, in triple form,

Required me of my father ; first he came
A manifest bull ;—next rolled in volumed folds
A spotted serpent ;—then gigantic stalked
In form a mortal, and in head a bull,
While from his bearded chin irriguous flowed
Streams of the fountain flood. To such a lord
Was I, unhappy ! destined ; and for death
Arose my ceaseless prayer, or ere I came
To his loathed bridal couch. At length, though late,
Yet oh ! to me how welcome, the famed son
Of lofty Jove and fair Alcmena came,
Who, with the monster matched in mortal strife,
My freedom won. The horrors of the fray
I cannot tell—I know them not—such scene
He, who unmoved beheld it, best can paint.
Appalled I sate in mute and breathless fear,
Lest that my fatal beauty should but work
My lasting woe. The Arbiter of strife,
Eternal Jove, th' event awarded well,
If it indeed were well. I, to the couch
Of Hercules advanced, his well-won prize,
Still in my bosom feed corroding care,
Distracted for my lord. Nights come and wane,
But only lend variety to woe.
And I have borne him children, whom, like one

That tills a field far distant, he hath seen
But twice—in seed-time and in harvest once.
A life like this restores the chief to home,
And drives him thence, in ceaseless bondage held.
Now, his allotted labours all achieved,
Redoubled terrors haunt me. From what time
He slew the valiant Iphitus, we dwell
Exiles in Trachis with our generous host.
But where my lord is gone, this none can tell.
Hence, his strange absence wakes my restless dread ;
I more than fear some dire reverse hath chanced.
'Tis no brief space ;—ten lingering months have fled,
And five ; yet through this long, long interval
He sends no herald ; there is some dread cause.
Parting, such tablet to my hand he gave ;—
The Gods in mercy grant I have received it,
Not to our mutual misery !

Att. Honoured lady !
Long have I witnessed thine incessant tears,
Poured for the absent Hercules ; and now,
If it be lawful for a slave to breathe
Her counsel to the freeborn, would I speak:
Lady, thou dost abound in manly sons ;
Why send not one to seek thine absent lord ?
And first, if I may name him, the brave Hyllus,

Whom, if his sire he reverence, such bold deed
Would best beseem. Lo! to the palace now
He hastens opportune, and if thou deem
My counsel worthy, of thy son's approach,
And of my words, thou mayst avail thee now.

Enter HYLLUS.

HYLLUS, DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT.

Dei. My son, my much-loved offspring, from
the lips
Ev'n of th' ignobly born high speech proceeds.
This woman is a slave, and yet her words
Might well become the free.

Hyll. What hath she spoken?
Inform me, mother! if thou mayst inform me.

Dei. She deems it foul reproach, that when so
long
Thy sire delays, thou shouldst not search what land
Hath thus detained him.

Hyll. This I know already,
If we may credit rumour.

Dei. Where on earth,
My son, abides thy father?

Hyll. The past year,
'Tis said, in bondage to a Lydian dame,
He bore th' ignoble labours of a slave.

Dei. If shame like this he brooked, what added
baseness
May we not dread to hear?

Hyll. But, as I learn,
He is once more in freedom.

Dei. Where doth fame
Report him tarrying now, alive or dead?

Hyll. Against Eubœa and King Eurytus,
He led, or now prepares to lead, his band.

Dei. Knowst thou, my son, the certain oracles
He left with me, relating to that land?

Hyll. What oracles? Thy words are new and
strange.

Dei. That there his earthly pilgrimage shall
close,

Or, in this strife triumphant, he should pass
His yet remaining days in peace serene.

And, in such crisis, wilt not thou, my son,
Speed to the succour of thy noble father?

If he survive, his fortunes shall we share,
And if he perish, we must perish too.

Hyll. I go, my mother! had I earlier known
 The prescient word, I had not paused till now.
 ' My father's wonted victories will not leave
 Our minds to sink in terror. Yet, since now
 Informed, I will not cease till I explore
 The certain truth of all.

Dei. Go then, my son!
 He who, though late, aspires to noble deeds,
 When wisdom warns him, wins the meed of fame.

Enter CHORUS.

Chorus.

STROPHE.

O thou! whom star-gemmed night declining
 Wakes into birth, or soothes to bland repose;
 Thou Sun! in matchless splendour shining,
 Thee, thee I ask—do thou, bright Power! disclose
 Where doth Alcmena's offspring dwell?
 O thou, who beam'st with ever-lucid ray,
 Doth the bold chief in sea-girt isle delay?

¹ In this passage the translator has followed the arrangement of Erfurdt in preference to that of Brunck.

² In east or western climes ? O tell,
 Thou, whose pervading eye doth Heaven and Earth
 survey;

ANTISTROPHE.

I hear the plaintive wild lamenting,
 Which, like some hapless bird, for her loved lord
 Sad Deianira still is venting,—
 And slumber's lenient balm is never poured
 O'er her dull eye-lids !—In her breast
 The hero lives, well, well remembered there ;
 While on her widowed couch in chill despair,
 Unsolaced still by genial rest,
 She thinks on heavier ills her absent lord may bear.

STROPHE II.

As o'er the broad blue ocean,
 From north or south when whirlwinds rise,
 Unnumbered billows to the skies
 Are hurled in wild commotion,

² In order to avoid the incongruity of placing Hercules in two continents at once, it has been proposed to read λισσαῖσιν, for δισσαῖσιν. Without, however, investing the hero with the attribute of ubiquity, we may suppose the passage merely to imply an inquiry whether he were in Europe or in Asia.

And waves on waves successive roll ;—
 So must the Theban Hero bear
 The ruder shock of ceaseless care ;
 So ever-changing toils control,
 Rough as the Cretan waves ; yet some kind God
 Preserves him, ever safe, from Pluto's drear abode.

ANTISTROPHE II.

And hence would I reprove thee,
 Consoling while I seem to chide ;—
 Why should fair hope be cast aside,
 And chill despondence move thee ?
 The Sire, who sways this earthly sphere,
 Wills not unclouded bliss to send
 On man—but grief with joy to blend,
 And temper hope by fear :—
 Both, like the starry group that gems the pole,
 With ever-varying course, in just succession roll.

EPODE.

Spangled night, with sable sway,
 Frowns not on the world for aye ;
 Sorrow wounds not—golden store
 Doth not bless to change no more ;

Joy and woe in turn succeed ;
Hearts in turn must bound and bleed.
Lady, on my counsels dwell,
Trust that all may yet be well ;—
When, oh when ! did lofty Jove
Reckless of his children prove ?

DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

Dei. Aware, it seems, of mine o'erwhelming woes
Thou com'st—but, oh ! what pangs distract my soul,
From sad experience mayst thou never know !
As yet thou know'st not. Ever fresh and fair
Smile the gay meads where youth exults to rove ;
Unharm'd by sultry suns, or stormy showers,
By wintry winds unruffled—while the tide
Of life flows on in glad unvarying course ;
But when the name of virgin is exchanged
For that of wife, through the lone hours of night—
What sleepless care she feels—now for her lord,
Now for her children fearing. Then alone
From her own sufferings will she learn the weight
That presses on my heart. In days long past
Many and various evils have I mourned,

But never felt the pangs that now I feel.
 What time the royal Hercules went forth
 Upon his last emprise, within his halls
 He left a³ tablet, graven long since with words
 Of highest import ; such on perilous deeds
 Embarking, never to my hand he gave ;
 But as to conquest parted—not to death.
 Yet now, as if no more, he hath assigned
 My nuptial dowry—to his children now
 Divided their paternal heritage ;
 Prescribing first the time ;—if thrice five months
 Revolving found him absent,—then his doom
 Was fixed for death ; if he survived the close,
 Calm and unruffled were his future days.
 Thus had the Gods, he said, assigned the term
 Of his allotted labours ; thus the beech
 Oracular, at old Dodona, spake
 By the prophetic doves. The hour is come
 When some event must prove the presage true ;

³ Παλαιὰν δέλτον ἐγγεγραμμένην.—This notable record proves, undeniably, that Sophocles believed alphabetic writing to have been in common use in Greece in the age of Hercules, and can admit of no other interpretation than a *written document* analogous to our notion of a *will*.—Penn's Primary Argument of the Iliad, ch. xi.

Therefore, dear virgins, when in pleasing sleep
Entranced I lie, I start in frequent dread,
Lest he, the noblest of mankind, should fall,
And I remain to wail him !

Ch. Augur now
Omens of happier import, for I see
A crowned messenger approach from far.

Enter TRACHINIAN.

TRACHINIAN, DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

Tra. Most honoured Deianira, I am here
The first to free thee from thy load of terror—
Know, thy Alcides lives, with conquest crowned,
And offers to his tutelary Gods
A sacrifice of triumph.

Dei. What, old man,
What tidings dost thou bear me ?

Tra. Soon, oh soon,
Thy long-sought lord shall in his home appear,
Graced with triumphant fame.

Dei. And didst thou learn
From citizens or strangers these glad tidings ?

Tra. The herald Lichas, in the verdant mead,
 Recounted all. I heard the joyous tale,
 And foremost rushed to bear the welcome news,
 That I might win thy favour for my meed.

Dei. And how doth Lichas linger, when he bears
 Tidings of triumph?

Tra. Lady, much withstands
 His onward progress. Melia's thronging crowds
 Press round, and check his passage. Ardent all
 To catch the welcome tidings, none will brook
 The herald's absence, till his wish be won.
 Thus, though himself reluctant, he delays
 With those who seek his presence. Thou, ere long,
 Wilt greet his glad arrival.

Dei. Mighty Jove!
 Who dwell'st mid Æta's sacred ⁴ unshorn meads,
 On me, though late, thou hast bestowed deep joy.
 Break forth, ye virgins, into songs of gladness;
 Without, within the palace, let the hymns
 Of joy resound; beyond my fondest hope
 A ray of rapture brightens through despair.

⁴ Ἀτομον λειμῶνα.—So Euripides.

Σοὶ τόνδε πλεκτὸν στέφανον ἐξ ἀκηράτε

Λειμῶνος.—κ. τ. λ.—Hippol. 72.

Chorus.

Ye, who crowd yon palace, raise
 Round your altars hymns of praise ;
 Let the virgin-choir on high
 Swell the bridal harmony ;
 While the youth's responsive train
 Echoes the exultant strain.
 Sing the guardian Lord of Light,
 Armed with golden quiver bright,
 Blending still, with glad acclaim,
 Pæan, Pæan, honoured name.
 Virgins, pour th' enraptured lay
 To the Sister of the Day ;
 ' Dian sing, whose fatal bow
 Lays the stately quarry low ;

⁵ Ἐλαφηβόλον.—So Homer, Hymn. in Dian.

Ἄρτεμιν αἰείδω, χρυσηλάκατον, κελαδεινήν,

Παρθένον αἰδοιήν, ἐλαφηβόλον, ἰοχέαιραν.

Ἀμφίπυρον.—Hecate, or Diana, was represented in the mysteries as holding a torch in each hand. The epithet, however, may be taken as expressive merely of the splendour of the Goddess, “ de Diana in plenilunio : ἀμφιπύρον, undique fulgidum.”—Hippol. 559.

Vested in encircling fire—
And th' attendant virgin ⁶ choir!

I soar extatic.—Monarch of my soul,
Ne'er will I spurn, sweet pipe, thy bland control.
The ivy-twined Thyrsus wakes a thrill
Through all my breast, inflaming wild desire
To join the sportive Bacchic choir.
Iö, Iö Pæan still
I sing!—Look, look, beloved Queen,
Full in thy presence now the pledge of joy is seen.

Dei. I see, dear virgins ; to its office still
Mine eye is true, and marks this joyful train.

Enter LICHAS with Captives.

DEIANIRA, LICHAS, CHORUS, CAPTIVES.

Herald, I bid thee welcome, though thy coming
Was long delayed, if thou bringst aught of glad-
ness.

⁶ Γείτονάς τε νύμφας,—the adjacent shore of Trachis was sacred to Diana, who was usually accompanied with a train of attendant nymphs.

Li. We come with happiest omens, and our
deeds,

Lady, this joyful greeting well may claim—

Such words befit the messenger of good.

Dei. Thou of mankind most welcome—tell me
first

What most I burn to hear ;—shall I once more

Greet Hercules alive?—

Li. I left the King

Strong in his wonted might, from ills secure,

Vigorous in health, not pining with disease.

Dei. Where? in his own, or some barbaric clime?

Li. On the Eubœan shore ; an altar there

He rears, and offers to Cenæan⁷ Jove.

Dei. Some vow discharging, or by Heaven en-
joined?

Li. Bound by a vow, when his good spear sub-
dued

The city of these women, whom thou seest.

Dei. Who, by the Gods, are these, and whence
their race?

They claim my pity, or their woes deceive me!

⁷ So called, from Cenæum, a promontory of Eubœa, sacred to Jupiter.

Li. These, when the towers of Eurytus he razed,
The victor for himself and Heaven reserved.

Dei. And in this siege were the long dreary
months,
Since last he left his palace, all consumed?

Li. No; through the greater part was he detained
In Lydia, as he tells; not free, indeed,
But bartered as a slave—nor thou arraign
My tale, O Lady; 'twas the act of Jove.
Sold to barbaric Omphale, he pined
A year in bondage, as himself relates.
Stung by disgrace so shameful, with an oath
He charged his soul, to lead the guilty cause
Of this keen outrage, with his wife and children,
In bondage not less bitter. Nor in vain
Was pledged his faith. He, from the guilt absolved,
Raised his confederate band, and sought the towers
Of Eurytus; for him of all mankind
He deemed sole author of such deadly wrong;
Who, when thy Lord his sheltering palace sought,
A guest of ancient days, reviled him much
In words of insult, much with rancorous soul;—
And said—though he th' inevitable darts
Bore in his hand, his sons were better skilled
To draw the bow; and added—that a slave

Deserved but blows and insult from the free.
⁸ And at the banquet, when with wine opprest,
 Expelled him from the palace. By such wrong
 Incensed, when ⁹ Iphitus essayed to track
 O'er the Tirynthian hills his vagrant steeds,
 And mind and eye on other cares were bent,
 From towering rock he dashed the wretch to earth.
 Indignant at the deed, Olympian Jove,
 The King and general Father, drove him forth
 To pine a purchased captive, nor endured
 That he should slay this only of mankind
 With treacherous fraud, though if in open war
 He had avenged the outrage, Jove had stamped
 His seal and sanction on the righteous deed;
 But the great Gods abhor injurious wrong.
 They who with insolent taunts reviled the chief,

⁸ Hercules, though the son of Jupiter, and himself a probationary God, appears to have been addicted to drunkenness—one of the most disgusting of human propensities—in no common degree. Even the beautiful drama of Alcestis is deformed by the introduction of the inebriated Hercules, exclaiming to the astonished and indignant attendant—

Οὗτος, τί σεμνὸν καὶ πεφροντικὸς βλέπεις;

⁹ One of the sons of Eurytus.

Are now the tenants of the silent tomb ;
Their city is enslaved—these, whom thou seest,
From loftiest splendour plunged to deepest woe,
Await thy pleasure ; so thy Lord hath willed,
And I, his faithful slave, fulfil his bidding.
Know, too, that he, the votive rites performed
For this glad conquest to his Father Jove,
Himself will come. Of all my lengthened tale,
This word, I deem, awakes thy liveliest joy.

Ch. Now, Queen, true joys are thine, from what
thou seest,

And the glad tidings in his words conveyed.

Dei. How can I but exult, and that most justly,
Hearing the prosperous fortunes of my Lord?
There is, at least, high cause of transport here ;
Yet those, who scan the dubious future well,
Must fear, lest rapture change ere long to woe.
Strange doubts, dear virgins, through my bosom
thrill,
When these ill-fated captives I behold,
Without or sheltering home, or parents' love,
Unhappy wanderers in a foreign land,
Who, sprung perchance from free-born sires, are
doomed

Henceforth to pine in servitude unblest.
 Eternal Jove,¹⁰ averter of my woes !
 O may I never be condemned to see
 Thy hand thus heavy on my fated race ;
 Or if thou wilt their woe, first let me perish :
 Such dread the sight of this sad train awakes.
 But who art thou ? so young, and yet so wretched ;
 A virgin or a mother ? If thy mien
 May wake conjecture, still unwedded thou ;
 Whate'er thou art, most noble. Tell me, Lichas,
 Who is this stranger-maid ? What mother bare her ?
 What father boasts her lineage ? Herald ! speak,—
 Far o'er the rest our sympathy she claims ;
 For she alone endures her grief with patience.

Li. How should I know ? Why ask of me such
 question ?

She springs, perchance, from no ignoble race.

Dei. Is she a daughter of King Eurytus ?

Li. I cannot tell ; I made no long demands.

Dei. From her companions heardst thou not her
 name ?

Li. No ; I performed th' allotted task in silence.

¹⁰ Ζεύς Τροπῆς—Jove, averter of ills, or subverter of empires.

Dei. Speak thou, unhappy ; tell thy tale of woe,
For not to know thee seems itself misfortune.

Li. In sooth the virgin now no more replies
Than heretofore ; nor hath she uttered aught
Of lofty taunt, or plaint of hopeless woe ;
But ever, crushed by grief's overwhelming load,
Weeps on in restless anguish, since she left
Her native land of storms. Sad is her doom ;
O let her sorrows meet thy kind forbearance.

Dei. Let her then pass, and enter in the palace
As most she list ; to her severer woes
I would not add one pang : enough, alas !
Her sufferings wound already. But let all
Retire within the palace ; thou, to speed
Where duty calls thee ;—I must straight prepare
A worthy greeting for my much loved lord.

[*Exeunt* LICHAS and CAPTIVES.]

DEIANIRA, TRACHINIAN, CHORUS.

Tra. Nay, rest thou here a moment, that, from
these
Apart, thou first mayst learn on whom thy roof
Bestows a refuge, which thou hast not heard,

Yet much imports to hear. I have of all
A full and certain knowledge.

Dei. And what hast thou,
Thus to arrest our step?

Tra. Remain and hear me.
My former tidings were not lightly breathed;
Nor will I now delude thee.

Dei. Wouldst thou then
I called the herald hither; or alone,
To me and to these virgins wouldst thou speak?

Tra. Nought hinders me to speak with these
and thee,
But let the rest depart.

Dei. They have departed;
And now thy news unfold.

Tra. In all that late
This Lichas said, he passed the bounds of truth.
Or he is now most faithless; or at first
He came a lying herald.

Dei. Sayst thou so?
Unfold the purport of thy dubious speech,
For all as yet is strange and most obscure.

Tra. I heard this man affirm, and numbers there
Were present to attest it, that thy lord,
For love of this sweet maid, slew Eurytus,

And stormed the strong Æchalia. Love alone,
Of all the Gods, impelled him to the combat.
He was no slave in Lydia,—no base tool
Of Omphale; nor was the hapless youth,
Whom from the rock he hurled, the fated cause,
As this dissembler feigns; assigning thus
A specious pretext for the Hero's fall.
But when thy lord in vain her father prayed
To give his daughter to his arms in secret,
Some trivial plea of enmity he feigned,
And warred against her country,—slew the King
Her sire, and razed the city to the dust.
Now, as thou seest, he sends her to thy halls
Not unregarded, nor in captive guise.
Believe it not, dear Lady! 'tis opposed
To reason; since his heart beats high with love.
I deemed it fitting to declare the whole
To thee, O Queen, e'en as I chanced to hear it;
And, in the concourse of Trachinia's sons,
Numbers, as I, were conscious to the tale,
And will confirm it. If my words be harsh,
I grieve to wound thee, yet I speak the truth.

Dei. Wretch that I am! what ills are gathering
round me,—
What latent plague beneath my very roof

Unconscious have I sheltered. Wretched me!
Was she without a nation or a name,
As the base wretch who led her falsely swore,
In form so stately and in face so fair?

Tra. Her father was King Eurytus,—her name
Is Iole; yet nought could he reveal—
Right trusty herald!—he forbore to ask it!

Ch. I would not call down vengeance on all
crimes;
But when such baseness with unseemly art
Is glossed and varnished, let the traitor perish.

Dei. What, Virgins, shall I do? Struck with amaze
At this sad tale, ten thousand fears distract me.

Ch. Question the herald; he in open terms
Perchance may speak the whole, if force constrain
him.

Dei. I go: thy counsel is on wisdom built.

Ch. Shall we remain, or what are thy com-
mands?

Dei. Remain. The man, unsummoned by our
train,
Spontaneous now is issuing from the palace.

Enter LICHAS.

LICHAS, DEIANIRA, CHORUS, TRACHINIAN.

Li. What greeting, Lady, should I bear from
thee

To thy loved Hercules. Speak now thy will;
Thou seest me straight departing.

Dei. Art thou then,
Absent so long, thus ardent to depart,
Ere we have fully questioned of thy lord?

Li. If thou hast aught to question, I am here.

Dei. And wilt thou answer with unvarying truth?

Li. Far as I know, great Jove attest my faith.

Dei. Who is this captive, whom thou broughtest
hither?

Li. Eubœa is her country;—of her race
Nought can I tell thee.

Tra. Villain, look on me.

Art thou aware to whom these words are breathed?

Li. And why of me dost thou demand such
question?

Tra. First, if thou dar'st, reply to what I ask
thee.

Li. To my most honoured Lady, Deianira,
Daughter of Æneus, wife of Hercules,

My noble mistress, or mine eyes deceive me.

Tra. The answer this I sought. Thou dost confess

She is thy mistress?—

Li. Yea; with strictest justice.

Tra. What then?—what fitting vengeance should requite thee,

If to thy mistress thou be found a traitor?

Li. And how a traitor? What base wiles are these?

Tra. None; thine own deeds evince the greater baseness.

Li. I go; so long to listen was unwise.

Tra. Nay, not at least till my demand be answered!

Li. Ask what thou wilt, since thine ungoverned tongue

Spurns all restraint.

Tra. Know'st thou the captive, then, Whom hither thou hast brought?

Li. I know her not.

What prompts th' inquiry?

Tra. Didst thou not affirm,
This slave—whose name, forsooth, thou canst not
tell—

Was Iole, the child of Eurytus?

Li. And where affirm it? Whom canst thou
adduce

Such charge to witness?

Tra. Numbers of our state;—
Crowds in the mid Trachinian forum heard
Thy narrative.

Li. I own it. I declared
So I at least had heard; but vague report
Is not the firm assurance of a fact.

Tra. Why prate of vague report? Didst thou
not say,

Nay, swear thou brought'st the bride of Hercules?

Li. I brought his bride?—Speak, Lady, by the
Gods!

Who is this babbling stranger?

Tra. One who heard thee,—
In person heard thee say, for love of her
He sacked the city; not to vengeance roused
By the insulting Lydian. Love alone
Impelled him to the deed.

Li. Hence with the fool,
O Queen! to trifle with a brain diseased
But ill becomes the wise.

Dei. Nay, but by Him

Who rolls dread thunders through the shadowy groves
On Æta's brow, I charge thee, seek no more
To hide the truth from me. Thou wilt not speak
To a weak woman, or to one untaught
Of man's estate ; that in the same delights
He finds not always gladness. He who strives
With mightier Love, and lifts th' opposing hand,
Is void of wisdom. O'er th' immortal Gods
Love lords it at his will ;—he rules *my* breast,
And wherefore not another's, framed as mine ?
Should I condemn my husband, by such flame
Possessed, or censure this unconscious maid,
Who works no evil,—no disgrace to me,
I were indeed of prudence all bereft.
It is not thus. But, if thy Lord hath trained
His servant to deception, thou hast learned
No worthy lesson : if in such base lore
Thou wert thine own instructor, when thy will
Would show thee honest, thou wilt seem a traitor.
Speak then th' unvarnished truth. To the free-born
'Tis foulest stigma to be branded liar.
To shun detection is a futile hope.
Many to whom thou spak'st will tell the tale ;
And if indeed thou fear'st, thy fears are vain,
Since to be uninformed alone would grieve me.

To know—what evil? Hath not Hercules
 Of other consorts been the only Lord;
 Yea, and of many: and did one receive,
 At least from me, harsh words, or keen reproach?
 Nor shall she meet them, though for her his breast
 Glows with impassioned love. When first I gazed,
 She roused my liveliest pity, for I knew
 Her fatal beauty had but wrought her woe.
 Most wretched, though reluctant, she hath plunged
 Her state in ruin and herself in bondage.
 Such thoughts,¹ I spurn them to the winds afar.
 But thee, I charge, reserve thy fraud for others;
 Observe to me a never-swerving truth.

Ch. Obey the Queen, who counsels for thy good.
 Thou wilt not soon repent, and mine esteem
 Thou mayst regain.

Li. Most dear and honoured mistress,
 Since I behold thee weighing human acts
 With human sympathies, inspired by prudence,

¹ The propriety of this translation is dubious. The explanation of the scholiast, on which it rests, is decidedly reprehended by Blomfield, Sept. apud Theb. Gloss. line 687. The original, ἀλλὰ τὰυτα μὲν 'Ρέιτω κατ' ἔξρον, may be literally rendered,—“Let these things float with the stream.”

I will declare the truth, and nought conceal.
 'Tis even thus, as thine informant tells thee :
 Resistless love of her thy Lord inflamed,
 And for her sake, by hostile spear subdued,
 In one wide ruin sad Æchalia sunk.
 These things, for of thy husband I must speak,
 He nor enjoined me to conceal, nor did
 Himself disown them ; I alone, dear Lady,
 Fearing to wound thee with th' unwelcome tidings,
 Erred, if indeed thou deem'st my fraud an error.
 Now, since thou know'st the whole unvarnished
 truth,
 Not less for thy Lord's sake than for thine own,
 Endure the maid with pity and with patience,
 And prove by actions what thy words have pledged.
 He, whose unmated prowess conquered all,
 By love of her himself is vanquished now.

Dei. It is our settled purpose thus to act,
 Nor will we court a ² voluntary ill,

² Νόσον γ' ἐπακτὸν. It is difficult to discover the exact signification of the word ἐπακτὸν. By some it is interpreted *extrinsecus invectum*, by others *peregrinum*, by others again *voluntarium*.

Contending with the Gods. But let us pass
 Within the house, that thou mayst bear to him
 Our letters, and the gifts we would return
 For his rich presents.—Bear them to my Lord—
 Thou must not part unhonoured with a gift,
 Who cam'st attended by so rich a train.

[*Exeunt* DEIANIRA and LICHAS.

Chorus.

STROPHE.

Unconquered is the matchless might
 Of Venus. Though I may not sing
 How she beguiled th' Olympian King,
 And the dark Power of Stygian Night;
 Or Him whose wild waves roar,
 And shake the solid shore;—
 Yet rivals twain for this sweet bride
 In desperate fray encountering strove,
 Till wounds and dusty toil decide
 The guerdon of her love.

ANTISTROPHE.

The haughty Tyrant of the Flood,
Stern Achelöus rushed to fight;
Like a wild bull in form and might,
With towering horns the Monster stood;—
From Bacchic Thebes alone
Rushed forth Jove's warrior-son;
Wielding the bow—the club—the spear;—
Thus closed they—ardent for the bride,
While lone she sat and lovely there,
The Venus to decide.

EPODE.

And then and there rose mingling sound
Of bows and crashing horns around;
Foe twines with foe in hate's close grasp,
While many a groan and panting gasp
Bursts from each breast, as brow to brow
They meet in full encounter now.
Mean time the gentle virgin fair
On a green bank conspicuous sate,
Waiting her destined bridegroom there;—
(Thus matrons old the tale relate,)

That eye, whose beauty fired the fray,
Gazed on the strife in tearful dread,
Till from her mother's arms away
His beauteous prize the exultant victor led.

DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

Dei. While, gentle virgins, our brief guest within
Gives his last greeting to the captive train,
Impatient to depart;—to you I steal
Unseen, to tell what scheme these hands have
framed,
And claim your pity for the woes I feel.
Her whom I late received, I deem no more
A virgin, but my lord's affianced wife;
And, as his freight the mariner admits,
So I give entrance to my soul's despair.
Now on one bridal couch, one lord's embrace
We both await,—such worthy recompense
The true and noble Hercules—so named—
Awards me now for long and ceaseless care.
Yet not his love my keen resentment wakes,
Oft in this weakness hath he sunk before—

³ But oh! to dwell with her—with her to share
The rights once all mine own—what woman's heart
Can tamely brook? I see her vernal grace
Ripening to pure and perfect loveliness,
Mine own decaying fast; on that the eye
Is wont to dwell delighted, while from this
Turns the reluctant step. Hence, much I fear
Lest, while the empty honours of a wife
I share, the glad reality be hers.
Yet not e'en this, as I declared, should rouse
To wrath a prudent woman. Now, dear virgins,
What hope remains to soften my despair,
I will inform you. In a brazen vase,
With wariest care secluded, I have long
Preserved the shaggy Centaur's ancient gift,
Which in my youth's first blossom I received
From hoary Nessus, dying with keen wound,
What time he used o'er deep Evenus' flood
To bear for hire the traveller in his hands,

³ Aye, if he speak my name with his fond voice,
It will be with the same tone, that to her
He murmured hers—it will be, or 'twill seem so.
If he embrace me, 'twill be with those arms
In which he folded her.—Milman, Fazio.

Not by strong oar, nor sails of rapid bark.
When first departing from my native towers,
I followed great Alcides as his bride,
The monster bore me o'er; but when he reached
The midst afar, his wanton hands transgressed;
I shrieked aloud, and straight the son of Jove
Turned to the spot, and from his sounding bow
Sped the swift shaft;—it hissed unerring on,
⁴ And struck the monster with a mortal blow,
Who thus in death addressed me;—" Child of Æneus,
" So thou observe my counsel, thou shalt reap
" High profit from my death, since thee the last
" Of mortal race these hands their freight have
borne.
" If thou preserve the stiff and clotted gore
" That round my wound congeals, where hangs this
shaft,
" In the black blood of Lerna's hydra steeped,
" For ever changeless shall it bind to thine
" The soul of Hercules, that ne'er his love
" Shall burn to others as it burns to thee."
This, friendly virgins, hath my soul recalled;

⁴ Literally, And it whizzed through the lungs of his breast.

And since that hour I have preserved his gift
Hid in the palace. I have steeped this robe,
Applying all he bade me,—all is done.
Unhallowed arts I never,—never knew,
Nor seek to know them; for I scorn such baseness:
But by these spells could I transcend the charms
Of this young beauty, and revive the love
Of Hercules—the deed were well essayed,
If ye approve my purpose,—and if not,
I will forbear the act.

Ch. If thou hast aught
Of faith in such design, I fain must think
Thou hast not counselled ill.

Dei. Thus far alone
My faith extends. I can but think it true.
Experience hath not yet confirmed the fact.

Ch. Proceed then to the act; for though thy
trust
Be firm, if unessayed, thou canst not prove it.

Dei. Ere long we shall be taught; for, lo! I see
Yon herald quit the house,—he comes with speed.
But be our secret kept; for guilt itself,
If wrought in darkness, oft escapes dishonour.

Enter LICHAS.

LICHAS, DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

Li. Daughter of Æneus, promptly speak thy
will ;

Too far already is our stay prolonged.

Dei. Such errand, Lichas, hath engrossed my
care,

While thou within heldst converse with the stran-
gers ;

That thou mayst bear this richly woven robe,

Wrought by my hand, a present to thy Lord ;

And, ere thou give it, say, in that fair vest

No mortal form, save his, may be arrayed ;

Let not the sun's resplendent beam glance o'er it,

Nor flame from hallowed altars, nor bright hearth,

Till he, enrobed in visible pomp, shall stand

Before the Gods on sacrificial day.

Such was our vow, if ever in these halls

We saw him living,—heard of his return,—

That, duly robed in this resplendent vest,

He should stand forth, and to the Gods display

A new adorer clad in new attire.

Bear too this token, this familiar seal,

Which at a glance thy Lord will recognise.

Away ;—discharge thine office well, nor aught
Presume beyond thine orders. Do thine errand.
So from one faithful service shalt thou win
A double meed, my favour and thy master's.

Li. If right the herald's heaven-taught charge

I know,

In nought, O Lady, will I pass thy word :
But this sealed chest, e'en as thou giv'st, present ;
And with unvarying truth report thy message.

Dei. Depart then on thine errand. Well thou
know'st

The royal state and service of our house.

Li. I know : and shall report that all is well.

Dei. Thou know'st, for thou hast witnessed,
with what kind

And courteous greeting I received this maid.

Li. Such, that mine heart exulted at the sight.

Dei. Aught else shouldst thou relate ? Alas ! I
deem

Thou to thy Lord mayst bear my tenderest love,

Ere bring like token of his love to me.

[*Exit* LICHAS.]

Chorus.

STROPHE I.

O ye who dwell on Æta's brow,
 Where tepid rills are gushing;
 To swell the genial baths below,
 From rocky fissures rushing;—
 Ye who on Melia's hallowed shore,
 Swayed by the golden-quivered Power,
 Reside;—where Greece, to grave debate,
 Convenes the sages of her state;⁵—

ANTISTROPHE I.

To you no more the flute shall raise
 The dirge-like strain of sadness;
 But emulate, with loftier lays,
 The lyre's celestial gladness:

⁵ The Amphictyonic council, consisting of delegates from certain of the states of Greece, invested with the charge of the public interests, was accustomed to meet twice a year; in the spring at Delphi, and in the autumn at Thermopylæ, near Melia. Demosthenes cites a decree, wherein the Amphictyonic council is called τὸ κοινὸν τῶν Ἑλλήνων συνέδριον.

The son of Jove, Alcmena's son,
 His last and deadliest conflict won;
 While Virtue decks his trophied brow
 With laurels, homeward speeds him now.

STROPHE II.

Twelve lingering months rolled slowly on,
 Yet, distant o'er the main
 The chief delayed, his doom unknown;—
 In hopeless—heartless pain,
 Wept his lone consort; her fond breast
 Ne'er found a solace or a rest,
 Till Mars, by wild desire possessed,
 Closed all our toils again.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Come then, O come,—let every oar
 Thy gallant bark impel;
 Soon let it greet our gladdening shore,
 And bid yon isle farewell,
 Whence now the incensed fumes arise;—
 Speed—speed, till eve invests the skies,
 Robed in the vest Persuasion dyes,
 The Centaur's mystic spell.

Enter DEIANIRA.

DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

Dei. I tremble, virgins, lest my late emprise
Hath passed the bounds of wisdom and of right.

Ch. Daughter of Æneus, what import thy words?

Dei. I know not yet; but much, I fear, ere long
I shall be proved, by honest hopes impelled,
To deeds of ill.

Ch. Thou speak'st not of the gift
Which thou hast sent to Hercules?—

Dei. I do.
O never—never more will I advise
The prompt performance of a dubious deed!

Ch. Tell us, if thou mayst tell, whence spring
thy fears?

Dei. That which hath chanced, my friends, is
passing strange,
Fraught with mysterious horror and dark presage.
The light wool, severed from a snow-white sheep,
With which but now I tinged the glittering robe,
Hath passed in air; not by th' attendant train
Consumed, but self-corroded,—shrunk in dust,
And loosely crumbled on the vacant stone.
But I will speak more largely, that to thee

May be explained the tenor of the deed.
Of all the Centaur charged me, as he writhed
In mortal anguish, by that shaft transfix'd,
Nought have I passed unheeded; but retained,
Like characters indelibly impressed
On brazen tablets, all. Thus he enjoined,
And thus have I fulfilled it. I have kept
The mystic unguent unapproach'd by flame,—
Untouch'd by day's warm splendour, close conceal'd
In deep and dark recesses, till the time
When I should tinge the fresh-anointed robe.
Thus have I done. And now, when need required,
Alone within, I spread it o'er the vest
With wool, just severed from a slaughtered sheep;
Then in a hollow chest enclosed the gift,
Screened from the scorching sunbeam, as ye saw.
But when again within our halls I turned,
A sight of horror met my shuddering gaze;—
Nor words can paint it, nor can thought conceive.
It chanced, the wool, with which I tinged the vest,
When thrown on earth, fell mid the noon-tide blaze,
Where play'd the sun's warm beams; and when it felt
That genial ray, dissolved I know not how,
And o'er the ground was scattered, light as dust
Which falls from wood, dissevered by the saw.

Thus to the earth it fell ; and where on earth
It lay, a strangely-swelling froth arose,
Dark as the purple juice of the rich grape
In Autumn, bursting from the Bacchic vine.
Wretch that I am ! I know not what to think :
But see too plainly I have done a deed
Of horror. Wherefore should the dying Centaur
Regard with kindness her who caused his death ?
It cannot be ; but ardent to destroy
The foe, who pierced him, he hath thus beguiled
me ;—

Which, ah ! I know too late, when the sad truth
Can nought avail. I, yes, and I alone,
Or visionary fears deceive my mind,
Have caused the hero's downfall. Ah ! I know
The godlike Chiron maddened with the pain
Of that black venom, when the arrow pierced him.
All things that live are blasted by its touch.
How then, O how, shall the envenomed gore
Which flowed from that false Centaur, spare my Lord ?
Like doom will soon be his, if right I deem.
But should he perish, 'tis my firm resolve
That we will die together. To survive
With infamy's dark spot upon my name,
From me were most abhorrent, who prefer

To all beside a soul that scorns dishonour.

Ch. From deeds of horror dread must needs arise ;
But lose not hope ere yet thou know the end.

Dei. Alas ! there is no hope in evil counsels ;
No cheering hope to rouse a glad reliance.

Ch. And yet to those unwittingly who err
Is anger lenient ; and if thou hast erred,
Such error hath been thine.

Dei. So one may speak
Who shares not in the wrong,—on whom the weight
Of conscious evil doth not press.

Ch. But now
Suppress the rest, unless thou wouldst disclose
Aught of the fatal secret to thy son.
He comes, who went before to seek his father.

Enter HYLLUS.

HYLLUS, DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

Hyl. O mother—would that one of these three lots
Were mine to choose ! that thou wert now no more,
Or, living still, didst call another son,
Or couldst acquire a better frame of mind,
Than now bears sway within thee.

Dei. O my son,
What have I done to merit scorn like this?

Hyl. Know, thou hast slain on this accursed day
Thy husband, and my father.

Dei. Woe is me !
My son, what tale of horror dost thou bring ?

Hyl. A tale of that which cannot be undone.
For who hath power o'er deeds, that once have birth,
To bid them be as they had never been?

Dei. What hast thou said, my son? By whom
informed

Com'st thou to charge me with a crime so hateful?

Hyl. Nay, with these eyes I saw the piercing
pangs
That wrung my father—'twas no vague report,
No idle rumour.

Dei. Where didst thou behold,
Where stand in presence of thy noble father ?

Hyl. If thou must hear it, I will tell thee all.
When from the wreck of famed Æchalia's towers
He came, with victory's trophies richly graced,
And victims for the Gods ;—high o'er the strand
Of steep Eubœa rises a rude rock,
Stemming the onward sea, Cenæum called ;—
There to his Father Jove he rears a shrine,

⁶ And consecrates a grove ; with ardent joy
 I first beheld him there. While now in act
 To slay the numerous victims, from his home
 The herald Lichas in that instant came,
 Bearing thy gift, the death-impregnate robe.
 In this arrayed, as thou hadst straitly charged,
 He slew the victims—twelve selected bulls,
 The noblest of the spoil—and mingled there
 A hecatomb of meaner sacrifice.
 At first th' unhappy hero, glad in soul,
 And in his vest exulting, paid his vows ;—
 But when th' ensanguined flame arose on high,
 From the rich offerings and the unctuous wood,
 Soon from his skin burst forth the copious sweat,
 And, as by dexterous artist firmly fixed,
 To his whole body clung that deadly robe ;
 Till shooting anguish thrilled in every bone,
 Rending his frame convulsive. When at length,
 The fiery venom of the viperous foe

⁶ ΤΕΜΕΝΙΑΝ ΤΕ ΦΥΛΛΑΔΑ, literally, the leafy foliage of a grove.
 On all sacred solemnities, the altars were crowned with
 branches :—

Nos delubra Deum miseri, quibus ultimus esset

Ille dies, festa velamus fronde per urbem.

Virg. Æn. ii. 248.

Shot burning through his veins, he sternly asked
Th' ill-fated Lichas, — of thy treacherous deed
In all unconscious, — with what base intent
He brought the robe ? — Unknowing aught of ill,
The hapless herald answered — 'Twas thy gift
Alone, and, as he brought it, sent by thee.
He, at the word, infuriate with the pangs
That tore his frame asunder, by the foot,
Where bends the ancle, grasped the hapless wretch,
And dashed him on the wave-encompassed rock ;
Then from his shattered head poured mingling down
A hideous mass of brains and gushing blood.
The countless concourse raised a bitter cry
For him who maddened, and for him who died ; —
But none might venture to approach the hero.
Wild with his pangs, he prostrate fell to earth,
Now stood erect, still shrieking. The high rocks
His groans resounded ; — Locris' sylvan crags,
And wide Eubœa's promontories steep.
When he grew faint with anguish, oft on earth
The sufferer dashed his frame, and ceaseless raised
Shouts of deep wailing, mingling stern reproach
On thy unhappy couch, the nuptial tie
Of Æneus, whence this fell destruction sprung.
Then raising through the mist that darkened round

His dim distorted eye, it fell on me,
Weeping amidst the crowd; he looked—and called
me:

“ Approach, my son! Oh fly not my despair,
Forsake me not, though we should die together;
But raise me, raise, and bear me to some spot
Where mortal eye may never more behold me.
If thou hast aught of pity, bear me far,
At least from this loathed region, ere I die.”
Such aid imploring, in the bark we placed,
But scarce could bear him to the destined strand,
Convulsed with deadliest pangs; and here, ere long,
Wilt thou behold him living, or in death.
Such were thy counsels, mother, such thy deeds
To my poor father; for which traitorous acts
May penal Justice and th’ avenging Furies
Meet recompense award thee. Thus I pray,
If it be lawful—lawful it *must* be,
Since every law towards me thyself hast spurned,
And slain the best and bravest of mankind,
One on whose like thou ne’er shalt look again.

[*Exit* DEIANIRA.

Ch. Why steal away in silence?—Knowst thou not
This mute forbearance half confirms the charge?

Hyl. Nay, let her hence, and may the rising
winds
Far, far convey her from my loathing sight.
Why cherish still a mother's empty name
For her who acts not a true mother's part?
Let her away in triumph—such delight
As to my sire she gave, requite her baseness!

[*Exit* HYLLUS.]

Chorus.

STROPHE I.

Behold, dear virgins, with what fatal speed
The ancient oracle of Heaven
Hastes to its dread fulfilment driven;—
“When the revolving months,” so Fate decreed,
“Had crowned the twelfth long year,
“Rest from his toils severe
“The son of Jove should win;”—firm to its end
Doth the sure presage tend:
Who wakes to life and light no more,
His earthly toils are closed—his earthly bondage
o'er.

ANTISTROPHE I.

If in that vest, as in a bloody cloud
Involved, the Centaur's hate he mourns ;—
If in his side the venom burns
Which, fraught with death, from that fell Hydra
flowed ;—

How shall yon sun display
Another orient day
To him, thus tortured by that ruthless pest ;
And in whose burning breast
Dark Nessus, with dissembling art,
And guileful words hath fixed th' intolerable smart ?

STROPHE II.

Such wiles th' unhappy Queen essayed,
When o'er her house, from those new nuptials
sprung,
Impending miseries hung,
Nor dreamt, alas ! by fraudulent words betrayed,
For her loved Lord the deadly snare was laid.
Now, plunged in agony severe,
Down her sad cheek th' incessant tear
Of hopeless misery steals ;
While, hastening to its destined close,

Fate sternly points to heavier woes,
And darker curse reveals.

ANTISTROPHE II.

The fount of tears is bursting now,
The infection spreads:—Ye Gods! from adverse
might,

Ne'er did such ills excite
Our liveliest pity for Alcides' woe.
Weep for that spear, triumphant o'er the foe,
Which from Æchalia's hoary height
Bore the young bride, in beauty bright
The victor's lovely meed!
'Twas Venus, who in silence wrought
That spell with fearful issue fraught,
And her's the fatal deed!

Semich. Ah! do my fears deceive, or do I hear
Fresh lamentations bursting forth within?
What shall I say?—

Semich. No dubious sound, but wail of deepest
woe

It seems—new sorrows are unfolding there.

Semich. Mark, with what clouded brow and awe-
struck air

Yon aged nurse approaches to inform us.

Enter MATRON.

MATRON, CHORUS.

Mat. What evils, O my children! hath the gift
Sent to Alcides, on this house entailed!

Ch. What new affliction bringst thou, aged
mother?

Mat. The last of ways hath Deianira trod;—
That too with stedfast and unfaltering foot.

Ch. Thou canst not mean of death?

Mat. Thou hast heard all.

Ch. Ah! is she dead indeed?

Mat. Thou hear'st once more.

Ch. Unhappy Queen! how dost thou say she died?

Mat. In utter desperation was the deed!

Ch. Say, mother, by what doom she fell?

Mat. By her own ruthless hand.

Ch. Did rage, or frenzy—

Mat. 'Twas a weapon's point
The wound inflicted.

Ch. How did she contrive
The deadly act?

Mat. Redoubling death on death, alone she pierced
Her bosom with the sword.

Ch. And saw'st thou the infuriate deed ?

Mat. I saw, for at her side I stood.

Ch. How ? how ? Recount the whole !

Mat. I said her own rash hand performed the
deed.

Ch. What dost thou say ?

Mat. The clear and certain truth.

Ch. Alas ! the new affianced bride
A vengeful Fury hath produced
To this devoted house !

Mat. Too true indeed ! But hadst thou marked
the scene
Which I have witnessed, soon thine heart would melt
In deeper, livelier pity.

Ch. How, alas !
Could woman's hand achieve so wild a deed ?

Mat. Aye, 'twas a deed of horror—hear my tale,
And then attest my truth. When first within
Alone she went, and in the halls beheld
Her sorrowing son the covered couch prepare,
As hastening to return and meet his sire,
She shrunk away where none might trace her pre-
sence :

Then, prostrate at the altars, wailed aloud
 Her widowed state, and ever as she touched
⁷ Works which, in happier days, her hands had
 wrought,
 Fresh tears of grief and agony gushed forth.
 Thus, as she roved distracted through the palace,
 If chance her eye some loved domestic caught,
 Again she wept in anguish at the sight,
 Her hapless doom deploring; and her house,
 Alas ! from henceforth and for ever childless.
 When from these plaints she ceased, I saw her
 next,
 With sudden impulse, to the chamber rush
 Of her Alcides ;—latent near I lay,
 And with observant eye kept ceaseless watch,
 And marked th' unhappy Lady fondly strew
 The outspread garments on the hero's bed ;
 This mournful task fulfilled, upon the couch
 She wildly sprung, and sad reclining there,
 With a quick flood of passionate tears, exclaimed—
 “ O thou beloved couch, my bridal bed,
 “ Farewell, farewell, for ever ! never more

⁷ Ὀργάνων,—literally, tools or implements of work.

“ Shalt thou receive me to thy soft repose.”
Lamenting thus, with hasty hand she loosed
Her robe, where shone the bright clasp on her breast,
And her left shoulder, with her side, laid bare.
I rushed, with hurried step, swift as the strength
Of faltering age allowed, to tell her son
What desperate deed she planned; but while we
 haste
With hurried footsteps in uncertain dread,
Deep in her side the two-edged sword we saw;—
The point had pierced her vitals. At the sight
Her son lamented, for he knew in wrath
The wretched sufferer struck that mortal blow;
Too late apprized by others, how she wrought
That deed, unconscious of the Centaur's wile.
Then, then indeed the hapless youth bursts forth
In loud repentant wailings; on her lips
Imprints vain kisses—by her side outstretched
Lamenting lies in anguish, mourning much
That he had rashly wronged her with a charge
Of foulest baseness; late deploring now
That by one stroke of two most tender parents
He is bereft. Such deeds are wrought within,
And who from henceforth shall presume to count
But on *one* day of life, I hold unwise;

To-morrow is not in the grasp of man,
Until the present sun go down in safety.

Chorus.

STROPHE AND ANTISTROPHE I.

Which miseries claim mine earliest tear,
Which fraught with anguish most severe?
My sorrowing soul explores in vain!
These in yon palace I descry,
And those await th' expectant eye,—
To feel or fear is equal pain.

STROPHE II.

O that some tempest wind,
From these devoted towers would rise,
And waft me far to foreign skies,
Lest with distracted mind
When I behold Jove's martial son,
I perish at the sight alone!
Homeward, they say, the chief returns;
While in his breast, returned to die,
Th' immedicable fever burns,
A marvel in his agony!

ANTISTROPHE II.

'Tis not for distant woe
 I pour lone Philomel's sad strain;
 Advancing lo ! a stranger-train :—
 Bear they the Chieftain now ?
 With slow and noiseless step they wend,
 As watchful o'er a suffering friend.
 Ah ! he is borne, in silence deep
 Reclined ;—nor can I yet explore
 If his dread pangs are soothed in sleep,
 Or stilled in death for evermore.

HERCULES, BORNE BY ATTENDANTS, HYLLUS,

CHORUS.

Hyl. Alas ! alas for thee,
 My father ! how thy sufferings rend my heart !
 What shall I do ? how aid thee ?—Misery !

Att. Hush, hush, my son, nor thus revive
 Thy frenzied father's maddening pain ;
 He lives, though soon to die. Close, close thy lips
 In resolute silence.

Hyl. Dost thou say he lives ?

Att. Thou wouldst not wake him, now in sleep
enchained,
My son, nor in his breast revive
That keen distracting malady.

Hyl. Nay ; but my frenzied mind
Is struggling with intolerable woe.

Herc. O Jove !
Ah whither am I borne ? with whom
Of mortals, racked with ceaseless pangs,
Am I now laid ? Woe, woe, unhappy me !
Again the fever burns—alas ! again.

Att. Hadst thou not learnt 'twere better far
To bear in silence, than dispel
Sleep from his heavy lids and throbbing brow ?

Hyl. Ah ! how could I endure
To gaze in silence on a sight like this ?

Herc. Ye altars, hallowed on the brow
Of high Cenæum's steep,
For victims slain what meed have ye repaid
To me, a wretch accursed ?
O Jove !

What shame, ah ! what hast thou imposed ?—
Oh had I never with these eyes
Beheld it ;—this immitigable wrath
Of frenzy never in my soul perceived !

What charmed strain—what healing hand,
Save thine, Eternal Sire, can soothe
These ever-gnawing pangs to rest?
O could I hail, far off, such marvel now!
O agony! away, away,
And leave me,—leave the wretched to repose,—
Yes; leave me to my doom.
Where dost thou touch?—Where lay me now?
Ah! thou wilt kill, wilt kill me—thou hast
roused
The pang that seemed to sleep.
O how thy very touch
Shoots anguish through my frame,—again
The fell disease steals on me. Where are ye
O most unjust of Greece, for whom full oft
Have I, engaged with monsters on the wave
And in all forest wilds, emperilled life;
Yet, in mine anguish, none will bring me now
Or fire, or welcome sword; no hand
Will grant me glad release
From this accursed life!
Woe, woe, unutterable woe!

Att. Son of the hero!—this sad task transcends
My feebler frame; aid thou; to his relief
Thine eye is quicker.

Hyl. I indeed support him ;—
But to relieve his pangs, around, within,
I see no helper—Jove alone can aid us.

Herc. Where art thou, O my son, my son !
Here, stay me here, and raise my fainting frame.
Ah miserable doom !
Again it springs, it springs upon me now,
Th' immedicable pest
That drives me to the tomb !
Pallas, again it maddens ! O my son,
Have pity on thy father—bare thy sword—
Strike—none can blame thee—heal the piercing pangs
Thy impious mother caused, whom may I see
Fall thus, e'en thus, as she hath wrought my fall.
Brother of Jove, kind Hades, hear !
Soothe, soothe me to repose ;—
With swift-descending doom
Compose the wretch in death !

Ch. How have I trembled but to hear the woes,
Which wring the bosom of the suffering Hero.

Herc. I who with daring hand and vigorous frame
Have wrought the matchless deeds no words can tell,
Ah never yet from Jove's indignant Queen,
Or the abhorred Eurystheus, have I met
Such burning pangs as Æneus' treacherous daughter

Enwove in this false net, this robe, the work
Of vengeful Furies, which consumes me now.
Adhering to my side, it hath devoured
Th' external skin, and clinging fast within
It drains the vital parts—the vigorous blood
It hath absorbed, and withered all my frame,
Bound fast in these inextricable toils.
This not th'embattled host, nor towering brood
Of earth-begotten Titans, nor the might
Of monsters fell, nor Greek, nor barbarous foe,
Nor those untraversed regions, where I passed
To rid the world of villains, e'er achieved;—
I fall not ev'n by man; a woman's hand
Slew me, unaided, and without a sword.
Thou, then, my son, if thou indeed art mine,
Revere no more thy mother's blighted name.
O give her to my vengeance, by thy hand
Dragged sternly forth—*thy* hand, that I may learn
If thou lament her fall—or mine—more deeply,
When thou shalt see my righteous vengeance smite
her.
Come, O my son! dare this. Ah! pity me,
Whom all must pity, wailing now in tears,
Like a weak girl. Such, ere this fatal day,
No mortal eye hath e'er beheld in me,

For all my sufferings never forced a groan,
Though in these pangs I seem a very woman.
Come now—beside thy dying father stand,
Gaze on the plague that fires my soul to madness—
I throw aside my vests—come all, and look—
Look on this form, thus wofully consumed ;
Behold mine anguish—pity my despair !
Ah miserable me !
Again the pangs are on me, through my frame
Again they thrill—this fell devouring pest
Yields not a moment's pause from agony.
King of the shades, receive me—
Strike me, thou bolt of Jove.
O King, O Father, hurl thy lightning-dart
Full on this head. Ah me, again it wakes,
It burns, it maddens. O my hands, my hands,
My back, my breast, my yet unconquered arms,
Was **it** with you I slew Nemea's pest,
Terror of flocks, the vast and tameless lion ?
Was **it** your might that crushed the dragon-plague
Of Lerna ;—and the troop—to mortal form
Who joined the courser's fleetness, lawless—proud—
Haughty in corporal might ;—did ye too slay
The Erymanthian boar, and curb in chains
The triple-headed guardian of the shades,

Till then unconquered, the infernal brood
 Of fell Echidna ;—and the dragon-guard
 Of golden fruit in Earth's remotest climes ?—
 These, with unnumbered conquests I achieved,
 While none o'er me a victor's trophy raised.
 Yet nerveless now, with torn and wasting frame,
 I pine devoted with this dark, dark curse,—
 I, who a mother of the noblest vaunt;—
 I, who in Heaven was styled the Son of Jove.
 But know ye this, though I am nothing now,
 And my famed might is nothing, I will yet
 Requite the deed on her who caused my ruin.
 First let her come, that, by experience taught,
 Her doom may tell, that not in life alone,
 But even in death, I did repay the guilty.

Ch. Unhappy Greece ! o'er thee what grief
 impends,

If thou shalt lose thy best and bravest Hero.

Hyl. Since, O my father, thou dost grant reply,
 With patient silence, though in anguish, hear me.
 Nought will I ask which justice would deny.
 Grant me thyself—not as by maddening pangs
 Exasperate—thus thou canst not learn from whence
 Relief should spring, and where thy pains are
 causeless.

Herc. Speak what thou wilt, but briefly. Tortured thus,
I trace no meaning in thy measured words.

Hyl. 'Tis of my mother I approach to speak,
Her present state, and most unwitting error.

Herc. O thou most shameless ! Dar'st thou but
to name
Thy father's murderer, and must I too hear thee ?

Hyl. Silence at such a crisis ill becomes me.

Herc. It ill becomes thee on her former crimes—

Hyl. Thou wilt not call them by so harsh a name.

Herc. Speak—but beware lest thou be proved a
villain.

Hyl. I speak. In recent death my mother lies.

Herc. By whom?—This wonder seems to verge
on falsehood.

Hyl. By her own hand—no stranger struck the
blow.

Herc. Ah ! ere she met her righteous meed from
mine ?

Hyl. Thou wouldst restrain thy wrath, if all were
told thee.

Herc. Thy words excite surprise—declare thy
meaning.

Hyl. In the whole deed she erred—her thought
was guiltless.

Herc. Guiltless, thou base one! Was thy father's
death
A guiltless deed?

Hyl. Deeming by mystic charms
To fix thy wandering love, she widely erred.

Herc. Who is of Trachis thus in magic skilled?

Hyl. The Centaur Nessus at his death beguiled her
By this false philtre to inflame thy love.

Herc. Ah me, unhappy! now my doom is sealed.
I die—I die—yon light is mine no more.
I see the fatal measure of my woe.
Come, O my son, thou hast no more a father;
Summon thy brothers and my children hither;
Call, too, the sad Alcmena—vainly styled
The consort of high Jove; that all may hear
My last portentous oracle of death.

Hyl. Thy mother is not here; but hence hath
past,
And by the shore at Tiryns holds her court;
Some of thy children share her fostering love,
Some dwell in Thebes afar. We, who are here,
In duteous care, my father, round thee stand,

To hear thy dying mandates, and obey them.

Herc. Thou then observe my charge; 'tis now
the time

To prove thy manly virtue, and assert
The honours of thy name, Alcides' son.

Long since my sire's sure oracle declared
That by no living mortal should I fall,
But by some habitant of Pluto's realm.

This, this is he, the Centaur; this by Fate
Foretold; who, long reposing with the dead,
Slew me, though living. Now will I reveal

New oracles, accordant with the old,
And a like doom denouncing, which I heard

What time I reached the Selli's sacred grove,
(A hardy race, who o'er the mountains roam,

And on the cold earth rest,) and from the oak
Of my great Father, on my tablets graved—

This very hour, it presaged, should appear
The close of all the toils by Fate assigned.

I dreamed of peace and gladness, while to me
It boded nought but death; for toil no more

Invades the peaceful slumber of the tomb.
Since, then, the end is certain, O my son!

Befits thee now to lend thy willing aid,
Nor wait a sterner and more angry charge,

But yield thy help spontaneous, of all laws
Deeming it noblest to obey thy father.

Hyl. Though, O my Father, with alarm I hear
A charge like this, I will in all obey thee.

Herc. First give me thy right hand—in solemn
pledge.

Hyl. Wherefore so warmly urge this pledge
of faith?

Herc. Wilt thou not yield it quickly, nor with-
stand

Thy father's pleasure?

Hyl. Lo! I give my hand,
And will in nought refuse thee.

Herc. By the head
Of Jove, my Father, swear.

Hyl. Swear to do what?
Say this, and I assent.

Herc. Swear to perform
The task I shall impose.

Hyl. Yea, I do swear,
And call dread Jove to witness.

Herc. If thou'rt false,
Invoke his wrath upon thee.

Hyl. That were needless;
For I will do it—yet invoke the curse.

Herc. Know'st thou the brow of Œta, dear to
Jove?

Hyl. I know. Oft have I there the victim slain.

Herc. Thither with thine own hand befits thee now
To bear this body, with thy chosen friends;—
And stripping from the deeply-rooted oak
Its branching honours, and the olive wild,
Construct a pyre, and there my body place.
Then, waving high the redly-blazing torch,
Fire the vast pile—yet not a tear be shed—
If thou art mine indeed, without a groan,
Without a tear perform it; and if not,
Though with the dead, my curse shall track thy path,
And hang most heavy on thy soul for ever.

Hyl. What hast thou said, my father?—what
enjoined?

Herc. What thou must straight perform;—if not,
henceforth
I am thy father, thou my son, no more.

Hyl. Ah! to what deed of horror wouldst thou
call me?—
To be a murderer and a parricide!

Herc. To this I call thee not. Be but the balm,
The only healer of thy father's pangs.

Hyl. How can I heal thee, lighting thus the pyre?

Herc. If here thou shrink, at least fulfil the rest.

Hyl. I will not shrink to bear thee as thou said'st.

Herc. And as I charged thee, wilt thou rear the pile?

Hyl. So that my hands touch not the fatal flame,
The rest I will perform—the task be mine.

Herc. This will suffice. Add now one trivial grace
To dearer favours, and I part in peace.

Hyl. Though it were most momentous, I will do it.

Herc. Thou know'st the virgin-child of Eurytus.

Hyl. If right I deem, of Iole thou speakest.

Herc. The same. And thus, my son! do I command thee.

When I am dead, if thou revere thy father,
And art observant of thy filial oath,
Make her thy bride, nor spurn thy sire's behest.
No mortal save thyself should e'er espouse
Th' affianced bride of Hercules. My son,
Let her become thy consort—yield this grace—
Though thou concede a greater, *this* denied,
Thy whole assent is valueless.

Hyl. Alas!
Wrath ill befits in miseries like thine;
But who can bear these wild and wayward ravings?
Herc. Thou wilt not then obey thy father's will?

Hyl. Nay, who, by vengeful Furies unconstrained,
Could wed the author of a mother's death,
A father's sufferings, keen and fierce as thine?
Nay, nay, my father, rather let me die,
Than live united to a foe so hateful.

Herc. This man, it seems, accounts a dying father
Unworthy of regard. But Heaven's dread curse
Shall surely wait thee, if thou still obey not.

Hyl. Alas! I deem ere long thou wilt confess
The fell disease beguiled thee.

Herc. Thou alone
Reviv'st the slumbering pangs.

Hyl. Wretch that I am!
What doubts distract my soul!

Herc. And yet thy soul
Disdains obedience to a father's bidding.

Hyl. And would my father teach an impious
part?

Herc. It is not impious, if it be my pleasure.

Hyl. And canst thou then with justice thus com-
mand me?

Herc. I can—and call the Gods to prove my truth.

Hyl. Then I will do it, nor resist thee more,
Appealing to the Gods thy will constrained me.
I cannot err, if I obey my father.

Herc. Well dost thou close. Now to thy favours add

One more—and promptly; ere returning pangs
Drive me to madness, place me on the pyre.

Come, haste, support me;—there of every toil
The close awaits me.—Death is rest for all.

Hyl. There is no cause to linger, since thy charge,
My father, bids—compels us to obey thee.

Herc. Come then, bold heart! and ere the pain
Returns,—as with an adamantine curb
Close, close my lips, that not a groan
May force its way. This last sad task
Is glad and welcome now.

Hyl. Raise him, attendants, and absolve
Me from the guilt of this dark deed;—
And, conscious of the fatal act,
Ascribe th' injustice to the Gods;
They gave him being—bear the name
Of Fathers, yet can view his pangs unmoved.
Fond man the future ne'er descries;
To us with woe the present teems,
And to the Gods with shame;
But falls with heaviest shock the blow
On him who bears these ills.

Ch. Nor ye, O virgins, in your homes remain ;
 Ye have beheld the mighty fall,
 Beheld these recent woes—unnumbered—strange :—
 But all were wrought by Jove's disposing hand.

[Exeunt Omnes.]

AJAX.

ALAX.

ALAX.

The tragedy of Ajax is perhaps the least interesting, though by no means the least elaborate among the dramas of Sophocles. We have already adverted to the very imperfect portions which it presents of the celebrated "Gods of Wisdom," nor can it with safety be affirmed that the deficiencies of the Dorian are in the instance at least counterbalanced by the excellencies of the Iliac. With all the allowance which can be extended by the most indulgent reader to the repelling description of mental aberration, it cannot but be acknowledged that the spectacle of the mighty and un-
der Ajax, committing nightly depredations upon

AJAX.

THE tragedy of Ajax is, perhaps, the least interesting, though by no means the least elaborate, among the dramas of Sophocles. We have already adverted to the very indifferent portraiture which it presents of the celebrated "Goddess of Wisdom," nor can it with safety be affirmed, that the deficiencies of the Divinity are, in this instance at least, counterbalanced by the excellencies of the Hero. With all the allowance which can be extended by the most indulgent reader to the repelling description of mental aberration, it cannot but be acknowledged, that the spectacle of the mighty and martial Ajax, committing nightly depredations upon

the flocks and herds, scourging and decapitating the unoffending and harmless rams, even under the impression that they were his mortal enemies,—to say the least—savours somewhat of the ludicrous. And it requires a more than ordinary exertion of the faculty of intellectual abstraction, so far to obliterate from the mind the remembrance of the Hero's degradation, as adequately to relish those beautiful passages which are interspersed throughout the play, contrasting the sublimity of terrific madness and resolute desperation with the mild, yet importunate, earnestness of the tenderest conjugal affection.

In this drama, also, the poet appears to have condescended more than usual in the artful introduction of passages, calculated only to produce stage effect. It is, or was some years since, the constant practice of a British audience to applaud most vociferously on any allusion to the glories of "Old England," however remote from, or inconsistent with, the business of the piece under representation. In like manner, it is to be imagined, was the noisy patriotism of an Athenian mob called forth by the encomiums of their native city. At least, it is difficult to account for the forced and

unnecessary recurrence of the same subject on any other supposition.

We shall, perhaps, be suspected of not entertaining even a proper and reasonable partiality for our author, if we proceed to notice a circumstance, which is only worthy of notice on account of its singularity — that in this drama Sophocles has descended to a pun ; a pun, uttered under the most agonizing circumstances, and uttered, too, by Ajax, who, according to the concurrent testimony of ancient authors, does not appear, at any time, to have enjoyed the reputation of a wit. It can hardly be urged, that these conceits in tragedy are either necessary or natural, though it is certain, that the poet who, of all others, has adhered most rigidly to nature, is most vehemently addicted to the practice of punning.

It is time, however, to enumerate some of the excellencies of this drama ; and, perhaps, it is not one of the least striking, that, in the delineation of the several personages, the poet has accurately preserved the Homeric character. The resolute, though somewhat brutal, hardihood of Ajax—the

contemptible malignity of Menelaus—the arbitrary selfishness of Agamemnon—and the supple versatility of that “much enduring” man, whose cold-calculating policy would never allow him to sin *gratuitously*, are admirably portrayed. We recognise at once the personages with whom we are so familiarly conversant; and recognise them in perfect consistence with those cherished prepossessions, the violation of which no originality could excuse.

Tecmessa is, unquestionably, a most interesting character. Her affection for Ajax combines the deep tenderness of a consort with the patient endurance of a slave; and her mild, yet earnest, remonstrances are not the less affecting, because Ajax, in the asperity of his replies, seems to remember that he is her master as well as her husband. It would, however, materially detract from the interest which we take in the amiable Phrygian, did we suppose, according to the interpretation of some translators, that the lord of her affections had been the murderer of her mother. The passage, however, upon which this notion is founded, as we shall notice in its proper place, appearing sus-

ceptible of a different rendering, we have not scrupled to adopt it, convinced that we have, at least, two powerful authorities in our favour,—reason and nature.

“ The scene is before the tent of Ajax, the last in station—so that it has the camp and fleet of the Grecians stretching along the shore to the west, a valley terminated by Mount Ida lying to the east.”

87

ALAZ

capable of a different resolution, we have not
scrupled to adopt it, convinced that we have, at
least, two powerful authorities in our favour,—
son and nature.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The scene is before the tent of Ajax, the last
in station—so that it has the camp and fleet of the
Grecians stretching along the shore to the west,
a valley terminated by Mount Ida lying to the
east.

MINERVA.
ULYSSES.
AJAX.
CHORUS OF SALAMINIAN SAILORS.
TECMESSA.
MESSENGER.
TEUCER.
MENELAUS.
AGAMEMNON.

Alas! Son of Laertes, I have overmarked thee
Forming some new attempt to save
And now I see thee at the tent of Ajax,
Of Ajax, on the camp's remotest verge,
Long keenly gazing, and with anxious eye
Tracking his latest footsteps, if he be
Without or in the tent. I have search'd
True as the quick scent of the hound,
Leads thee in season hither. He whom thus

MUTÆ PERSONÆ.

Tracking his latest footsteps, if he be
Without or in the tent. I have search'd
True as the quick scent of the hound,
Leads thee in season hither. He whom thus

How Ajax and Achilles heard the sound,
When ships, coming, the rounded navy found,
Helm, II. 2. 117.

AJAX.

MINERVA, ULYSSES.

Min. Son of Laertes, I have ever marked thee
Forming some new attempt against thy foes,
And now I see thee at the naval tent
Of Ajax,¹ on the camp's remotest verge,
Long keenly hunting, and with measured care
Tracking his latest footsteps, if he be
Without, or in the tent. Thine active search,
True as the quick scent of the Spartan hound,
Leads thee in season hither. He whom thus

¹ "E'en Ajax and Achilles heard the sound,
Whose ships, remote, the guarded navy bound."

Hom. Il. xi. 111.

Thou seek'st, is now within, his temples yet
 Reeking with sweat, his hands distilling gore.
 Within his gate no longer need'st thou pry;
 But speak the purpose that impelled thy speed,
 That thou mayst learn from one who knows the
 whole.

Ulys. O accents of Minerva, to my soul
 Dearest of Powers immortal, how mine ear
 Thy welcome voice perceives, and with my mind
 I grasp the sounds, though thou art viewless still,
 Clear as the Tuscan trumpet's² echoing clang!
 Well dost thou know my circling steps pursue
 A foe, bold Ajax of the massy shield;
 Him, and no other, do I track so long.

² Κῶδων, Tintinnabulum. In its proper signification, a little bell, used in camps, at the sound of which the soldiers were expected to answer. When applied to a trumpet it denotes the bell or broad part. The Tuscan Trumpet, Σάλπιγξ *Tyrrheniæ*, was invented by the Tyrrhenians. Its orifice was cleft, and sent forth an exceeding loud and shrill sound.

Tyrrhenusque tubæ mugire per æthera clangor.

Virg. *Æn.* viii. 526.

It may here be proper to remark, that when the Deities interposed in favour of mortals, they rarely became visible. Comp. Eurip. *Hippol.* 83-86.

This very night to us hath he achieved
Deeds most unlooked for, if those deeds be his :
For nought we clearly know, but wander lost
In vague surmise. Spontaneous I incurred
This arduous toil. We found but now the herds,
The prize of battle, weltering in their blood ;
Slain, with their keepers, by some ruthless hand.
All charge the crime on Ajax : o'er the plain
One who kept watch beheld him proudly stalk
With lofty strides, and newly-reeking sword.
He said, and proved it. I, by him apprized,
Pursue the track ; some signs I clearly trace,—
Some fill me with amazement,—and I learn
No sure conclusion. In glad hour thou com'st,—
My former acts were all inspired by thee ;
Be thou director of my future deeds.

Min. I knew it well, Ulysses, and long since
Came forth to guide thee in thy venturous path,
Propitious to thy toils.

Ulys. Say, Queen beloved,
Do I thus toil aright ?

Min. Thou dost ; this man
Hath done the deed.

Ulys. What urged his raging hand
To such strange acts of frenzy ?

Min. Fired by wrath
For great Achilles' arms.

Ulys. Why rushed he thus
On senseless cattle?

Min. In your blood he thought
He then embrued his hand.

Ulys. Planned he this deed
Against the Argives?

Min. Had I been remiss,
He had achieved it.

Ulys. With what bold intent,
What arrogance of soul?

Min. 'Gainst you he rushed
Alone, a night-marauder!

Ulys. Did he reach
E'en to his purposed goal?

Min. Yea; to the gates
Of the two Chiefs he came.

Ulys. What still withheld
His hand, intent on slaughter?

Min. To his sight,
Raising intolerable fancies wild
That cureless joy I checked,—and on the flocks
I turned his wrath—the herdsmen's mingled charge,
The spoils of battle, undivided still.

Rushing on these, throughout the horned droves
He spread destruction, smiting all around ;
Now fondly deemed he by his vengeful hand
The two Atridæ fell ; then sought the rest,
Now striking one—and now another chief.
I urged him still, and lured to evil toils
The man, misled by phrenzy's impulse wild.
Next, when he rested from his murderous task,
The oxen that survived in chains he bound ;
And to his tent the herd upbraiding drove,
Like men, the captives of his conquering spear.
These fettered in his tent he scourges now.
Nay, I will show thee his distempered mood,
That to the Argives thou mayst bear the tale.
Rest undismayed, nor as some dangerous ill
Receive the man ; for I will turn aside
His erring glance, nor shall he mark thy presence.—
Hear, thou who bind'st thy captives' hands in chains,
I call thee forth to meet me. Ho!—I call
Ajax,—appear without thy tent before me.

Ulys. What wilt thou do, Minerva ? call him not !

Min. Wilt thou not rest in silence, and unawed ?

Ulys. Call him not forth, by Heaven ! but let
him rest

Within.

Min. And wherefore? Was he not before—

Ulys. My foe, I own; and doubly hateful now.

Min. What laugh so sweet as that which scorns
a foe?

Ulys. Enough for me that he remain within.

Min. And dost thou tremble to behold a madman?

Ulys. I ne'er had shunned him when in saner mood.

Min. He shall not see thee, though thou stand
before him.

Ulys. How, if he views me with the self-same eyes?

Min. I will obscure perception, though he see.

Ulys. All things may happen, when a God
directs.

Min. Stand now in silence where thou art.

Ulys. I stand.

I would I were afar.

Min. Ajax—come forth;

A second time I call thee. Wherefore thus
Art thou unmindful of thy great ally?

Enter AJAX.

MINERVA, ULYSSES, AJAX.

Aj. Hail! O Minerva; daughter of high Jove,
All hail! in happy moment art thou come!

Thee too with golden offerings will I crown
For this glad booty.

Min. Thou hast spoken well.

But tell me first, hast thou embrued thy sword
Deep in the life-blood of the Argive host?

Aj. Such is my boast; nor will I e'er disclaim
The glorious deed.

Min. And hast thou raised thy spear
Against th' Atridæ?

Aj. So that never more
Shall they dishonour Ajax!

Min. If I hear
Aright, the men are dead.

Aj. Aye; let the dead
Now rob me of mine arms.

Min. 'Tis well: and where
Is now Laertes' son? What doom is his?
Hath he escaped thy vengeance?

Aj. Dost thou ask
Of that insidious villain?

Min. Of the same—
I mean Ulysses, thy detested rival.

Aj. Fettered he sits within, a welcome sight.
Death is a boon I will not grant him yet.

Min. What wilt thou do, what further vantage win?

Aj. First to the columns of my hall fast-bound —

Min. What ill design'st thou to th' unhappy wretch?

Aj. This scourge shall mark him deeply ere he die.

Min. Nay, do not thus at least insult the foe.

Aj. In all beside thy pleasure shall prevail;
But he shall bear this vengeance, this alone.

Min. Thou, then, since it delights thee thus
to act,
Indulge thy hand, nought of thy purpose spare.

Aj. I hasten to the task; but pray thee first,
Ever to aid me, as thou aid'st me now.

[*Exit AJAX.*

MINERVA, ULYSSES.

Min. Thou see'st, Ulysses, Heaven's resistless
might.

Who was more prudent than bold Ajax once,
And who more daring in the hour of need?

Ulys. I know of none ; but now he moves my
pity,

Thus plunged in misery, though my deadliest foe,
Who now is struggling with such weighty ills,
His fate regarding as mine own may fall.
I see that we who live are nothing more
³Than a vain image and a fleeting shade.

Min. This then observing, dare not thou to
breathe

High words of swollen pride against the Gods ;
Nor boast presumptuous, if in martial deeds
Or treasured wealth thou pass thy fellow man.
A day o'erthrows, a day to light restores
All mortal things—and still the heavenly Powers
Regard the lowly, while they loathe the proud.

[*Exeunt MINERVA and ULYSSES.*

³ *Pulvis et umbra sumus.*—Hor.

We are such stuff
As dreams are made of.

Shakspeare.

Ονειράτων

Ἀλίγκιοι μορφᾶσι.

Prom. Vinc. 457.

Chorus.

O son of Telamon, whose sway
The shores of Salamis obey,
Wet with encircling ocean's spray ;
I triumph in thy fame :—
But when th' indignant stroke of Jove
Descends, or slanderous Greeks reprove,
Then, timid as the fluttering dove,
I sink with fear and shame.
As from the night that now hath fled,
Loud rumours wake our liveliest dread ;
'Tis said, that rushing to the plain,
By thee the captured herds were slain,
To Grecian valour due ;
All that of martial spoils remain
Thy sword infuriate slew.
Such slanders doth Ulysses bear,
Such whispers breathe in every ear,
And much prevails ;—mid the low train
His calumnies glad credence gain ;—
As he who speaks, so they who hear
Insulting mock thy pain.
He rarely errs who flings on high,
At gallant souls, his contumely ;

Whilst I, of lowlier lot, evade
 The penalty by greatness paid ;
 For envy steals with silent aim
 On nobler worth and loftier fame.
 And though the mean, apart from power
 But ill support the tottering tower ;
 As they, to greatness linked, are strong,
 So greatness needs the meaner throng.
 Yet thus to teach th' insensate train
 E'en wisdom's self might speak in vain.
 From such the clamorous tumults flow,
 And powerless we to curb the foe,
 Without our Chieftain's aid ;
 Like babbling birds, while yet by thee
 Unseen, they vent their calumny ;
 But, like the vulture in his might,
 Shouldst thou, O King ! appear in sight,
 Soon would they urge their conscious flight,
 Confounded and dismayed.

STROPHE.

Did Dian, ⁴Queen of Tauris, Child of Jove,

⁴ Ταυροπόλα. According to Brunck, *vecta tauris* ; Lobeck, however, inclines to the sense of *huntress of bulls*. The

(O widely spreading fame,
 The parent of my shame!)
 Against the public herds thy frenzy move,
 Incensed by vows of conquest yet unpaid;
 Perchance defrauded of the promised spoil,
 Or victims vowed for hunter's prosperous toil?
 Or did the brazen-mailed Mars invade
 Thy breast with nightly wiles, avenging here
 The wrong thine arms have wrought to his con-
 federate spear?

ANTISTROPHE.

^s Not in the vigour of thy manly mind
 This erring deed was done,
 O child of Telamon!

Diana Taurica was worshipped at Brauron, a village of Attica; but if these rites were instituted subsequently to the carrying off Iphigenia from Tauris by Orestes, the poet, if our translation be correct, has been guilty of a gross anachronism. We must, however, concede somewhat to that poetical license, which puts a saying of Solon into the mouth of Deianira.

Euripides, *Iph. in Tauris*, 1457, has the same epithet:

Τολοιπὸν ὑμνήσῃσι Ταυροπόλον θεάν.

And celebrate in hymns the Tauric Maid.

West.

^s Φρενόθεν γ' ἐπ' ἀρισερά. Si mens non læva fuisset.—Virg.

Thy fatal frenzy was by Heaven assigned.
 Phœbus, and Jove avert the dire disgrace !
 But if the mighty Kings, to blast thy fame,
 Suborned the vulgar to these words of shame,
 Or he of 'Sisyphus' accursed race,
 No more, O Monarch, in thy tent delay,
 With eyes enchained to earth, to foul reports a prey.

EPODE.

Rise from thy seat, O King, where all too long
 In lingering anguish thou hast borne the wrong,
 Feeding the wrathful curse of Heaven ;—
 Thy fearless foes through every sheltered vale,
 With vaunting insult speed the slanderous tale ;
 And all with scoffing tongues on thee
 Pour foul reproach and injury,
 While my sad heart with settled grief is riven.

Enter TECMESSA.

⁶ Anticlea, the mother of Ulysses, is said to have been violated by Sisyphus, prior to her union with Laertes. Hence Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 529. "Hortator scelerum Æolides." Sisyphus was the son of Æolus.

TECMESSA, CHORUS.

Tec. Ye, from the ⁷ earth-born Erectheidæ sprung,
 Great Ajax' naval band,
 Well may we mourn, who from afar regard
 The house of Telamon !
 The brave, the bold, the matchless Ajax lies,
 Sunk by the turbid storm
 Of raging frenzy low.

Ch. How hath this night to heaviest sorrow
 changed
 The fortunes of the day !
 Daughter of Phrygian ⁸ Teuthras, since with thee,

⁷ Erectheus, son of Pandion, and sixth King of Athens. But, according to others, he is reported to have been the son of Vulcan and the Earth. It is well known, that the Athenians piqued themselves on the antiquity of their descent; hence Creon addresses them, in the *Œdip.* Col. 728.

"Ανδρες χθονὸς τῆσδ' ἐγγενεῖς οἰκήτορες.

This is, in the present instance, merely a political stroke to flatter the Athenians.

⁸ Teleutas in the text, but, according to some, Teuthras.

Though captured by his spear, great Ajax shares
The bridal couch of love ;—
Speak, for thou know'st, and canst impart the
whole.

Tec. How shall I breathe what words can never
tell ?

Of evils thou wilt hear more keen than death.
Our noble Ajax, by one frantic deed
This night is branded with eternal shame.
Within yon tent mayst thou behold,
Bathed in their blood, the victims of his wrath,
The slaughter of his hand !

Ch. What tidings of the fiery warrior these,
Nor to be borne nor shunned ;—
Already whispered 'mid the mighty chiefs,
And which, ere long, will gathering rumours swell !
Alas ! I presage ill ! The hero soon
Will fall indignant by the same rash hand
Which, armed by madness, slew with vengeful sword
The herdsmen and their charge.

Tec. Thence, thence, alas ! he came, and drove
The herd, like captives, to his tent ;
Some, stretched on earth, he slew within,
Plunged deep the sword in some, and clave in twain.
Two rams with snow-white feet he chose ;—the head

And tongue of one he lopped and cast away ;—
The other, to a column bound erect,
Seizing his chariot's weighty rein, he lashed
As with a double scourge, mocking it still
With keen reproach, which none of mortal race,
But some ill Power hath taught.

Ch. Time is it now for each with veiled head
And silent step to fly ;
Or mount the bench, and ply the labouring oar,
To urge along the ocean-ranging bark.
Such threats on us the brother-chiefs denounce ;
We too, I fear, crushed by o'erwhelming stones,
Shall share, ere long, the fortunes of our Lord,
Whom fate, resistless fate, impels.

Tec. Impels no more. ⁹Swift as the southern blast
That rose without red lightning, he rushed forth ;—
As soon is calm. Now, cooler sense restored,
He feels a fresh affliction ; since to gaze
On evils all our own, which none beside
Partakes, is keener woe.

⁹ The Scholiast informs us, that those who are acquainted with the nature of the winds have observed, that when the south rises, not attended with lightning, its violence soon ceases.—Potter. See Theophrastus, De Signis Ventorum.

Ch. If he be calm, then all may yet be well ;
Our cares are less for ills already vanished.

Tec. Which, if the choice were thine, wouldst
thou prefer ?

Wouldst thou, thyself at ease, afflict thy friends,
Or share their common grief in common ills ?

Ch. The two-fold evil, Lady, is the greater.

Tec. Thus we, no more diseased, are suffering
now.

Ch. What mean thy words ambiguous, for I
know not

The tenour of thy speech ?

Tec. This man, while yet
The frenzied plague possessed him, in his ills
Exulted ; we, more sane, were plunged in woe.
Now, since the respite to his madness came,
His bosom rankles with a keener pang,
Nor are our sorrows lighter than before.
Say, are not these two evils sprung from one ?

Ch. Thy words are just. I tremble, lest this
woe

Be Heaven's own plague. Alas ! how should it not ?
If, the disease now quelled, he joys no more
Than when it still was raging ?

Tec. Know thou then,
Such is his state.

Ch. And whence arose these ills ?
Inform us, Lady ; for in all his woes
We keenly sympathize.

Tec. Thou shalt hear all, as partner of the deed.
In the deep midnight, when the ¹⁰evening lamps
Glimmered no more, he seized his two-edged sword,
And, as I deemed, rushed forth without a cause.
I then remonstrate thus : “ What wouldst thou do,
My Ajax ? why thus issue from thy tent
Uncalled—unsummoned or by herald’s voice
Or by the signal trumpet ? Now, at least,

¹⁰ Ἐσπεροὶ λαμπτήρες. This has been understood to mean the stars ; but expressions occurring in various authors, περὶ λύχνων ἀφ᾽ ἄς, Dionys. Hal. xi. μέχρι λυχνῶν ἀφ᾽ ὧν, Athen. 12, “ ad extremas lucernas,” Propert. Eleg. 111, (to which we may add, pereundum est ante lucernas, Juvenal, x. 339,) are in favour of the rendering in the text. Ἀκρας νυκτὸς, the dead of night. Pindar, Isthm. iv. 58 :

Ἴστε μάν Αἴαντος ἀλκάν

Φοίνιον, τὰν ὀψία

Ἐν νυκτὶ ταμῶν περὶ ᾧ

Φασγάνῳ, κ. τ. λ.

The host is hushed in sleep." He but replied,
 In words abrupt, that for an adage pass,
¹ " Silence, O woman, is a woman's grace."
 Reproved, I ceased ; my Lord went forth alone.
 Meantime, nought knew I of the deeds he wrought.
 At length, the chief returned, driving in bonds
 The bulls, the shepherd-dogs, and horned prey.
² From some, the heads he severed ; some, on earth
 Laid prostrate, mangled with unsparing sword ;
 Some, bound in fetters, with the sounding scourge,
 Falling upon the flocks, as men, he lashed.
 Last, rushing through the portal, converse there
 He held, as with some spectre, speaking much
 Now of th' Atridæ, now Laertes' son,
 Commingling insult keen ;—how, by this deed,

¹ Γυναικὶ γὰρ σιγὴ τε καὶ τὸ σωφρονεῖν
 Κάλλιστον.

Euripides.

So Hector, Il. vi. 490. Indeed, ancient as well as modern authors seem pretty unanimously agreed on this very important subject.

² In this, as in several passages of a similar description, some deviation from the literal signification of the original has been found indispensable. " Some, turning them on their backs, he stabbed and hewed through their spine."

Their guilty outrage he had well repaid.
But when he bent his course once more within,
Where, in long time, cool reason scarce returned,
Soon as he marked the tent with carnage strewed,
He smote his head in anguish—dashed to earth
His form—lay prostrate mid the prostrate herds,
Tearing with ruthless hand his flowing hair.
Long time in moody silence thus he sate,
Then turned on me with threats of vehement wrath,
Unless I truly told the whole event,
And all the tenour of this fatal act.
I then, my friends, affrighted, of the deed
Revealed in trembling accents all I knew.
Straight he burst forth in loud and long laments,
Such from his lips I never heard before ;
For he till then maintained, that wailings wild
Were the sure symptoms of a coward-heart ;
Nor gave his sorrow utterance, but compressed
His groanings inward, like the murmuring bull.
Thus in his tent reclined in evil case,
Nor food nor drink hath cheered him ; but he sits
Amidst encircling slaughter mute and stern.
Some fearful deed he plainly now designs,
As wandering words and bursting groans declare.
Ye then, my friends, for in this hope I came,

Come, if ye can, and aid your gallant chief;
Oft are such hearts by friendly words subdued.

Ch. Sad is thy tale, Tecmessa, that a soul
So noble should be plunged in ills like these.

Aj. Ah me! Ah me! [Within.

Tec. Soon will his frenzy heighten. Heard ye not
How deep a groan from wretched Ajax broke?

Aj. Woe! woe is me! [Within.

Ch. He seems to grapple with his anguish now,
Or writhes in keen remembrance of the past.

Aj. Alas! my son! my son! [Within.

Tec. Ah me! Eurysaces, for thee he calls!
What means he now? Where art thou? Wretched
me!

Aj. I call for Teucer—where is Teucer? Still
Will he pursue the prey, while I am lost? [Within.

Ch. Sense hath, it seems, returned. Unclose
the door;

Regard for me may haply soothe him yet.

Tec. Lo! I unclose it; thou mayst now be-
hold

His frenzied acts and utter wretchedness.

[Scene opens and discovers AJAX.

AJAX, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Aj. O comrades, most beloved, my only friends,
 Who only honour's law regard;
 Ye see ³ what bloody waves
 From this tempestuous sea
 Your hapless Lord enclose.

Ch. Alas! too true, it seems, hath been thy tale.
 These fatal deeds proclaim how wild his frenzy.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Aj. My brave associates, skilled in naval art,
 To urge the light bark o'er the main;—
 You, you alone, of all
 Have I yet faithful found;
 Then slay me,—slay me now.

³ Φοινίας ὑπὸ ζάλης. This kind of metaphor is of frequent occurrence among the Greek tragedians. Æsch. Prom. 771. 1051. Eurip. Med. 603. Sophocles, Antig. 163. Œdip. Tyr. 23. So Shakspeare:

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 And, by opposing, end them.

Hamlet, act iii. sc. 1.

Ch. Speak words of happier import, nor in woe
Seek for o'erwhelming ills a deadlier cure.

STROPHE II.

Aj. See'st thou the bold, the lion-hearted chief,
Who never yet shrunk back from battle's van,
Vent his wild rage on herds secure of ill?—
Alas! what scorn, what mockery shall be mine!

Tec. My Lord! my Ajax! speak not thus, I
pray thee.

Aj. Wilt thou not hence! wilt thou not hence
retire?

O wretch! wretch! wretch!

Ch. Now by the Gods, my Lord,
Yield to her prayer, and calm thy frenzied soul.

STROPHE III.

Aj. Unhappy! who, from this right hand,
Let slip the hated foes;
And rushing on the sable herds
And unoffending flocks,
Drew forth inglorious blood.

Ch. Why sorrow thus for deeds already done?
It cannot be that thou recall the past.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Aj. O all-exploring and of every ill
The wily instrument, Laertes' son ;
Thou scorn and scandal of our warlike host ;
How wilt thou mock and revel in my woes !

Ch. As Heaven ordains, so man must smile or
— weep.

Aj. O could I meet him, though thus sunk in ills.
Unhappy me !

Ch. Nay, do not speak thus proudly !
Dost thou not mark the miseries of thy doom ?

ANTISTROPHE III.

Aj. O Jove!⁴ great father of my sires !
Could I but doom to death,
That specious, scheming foe, and crush
The sceptre-sharing Kings,
How gladly would I die !

Tec. When thou dost pray for death, ask too
for me

⁴ Προγόνων προπάτωρ. Ajax was the son of Telamon, the son of Æacus, the son of Jove. Thus Ovid, *Metam.* xiii.

“ Ab Jove tertius Ajax.”

The same: how could I live when thou hadst
perished?

STROPHE IV.

Aj. O darkness, now my light! O shades of hell,
My brightest radiance now,
Receive, receive your sad inhabitant;
Receive me, from this hour
Unworthy or to look
On the blest Gods, or on mankind,
To aid me in my woes.
The daughter of high Jove,
The Goddess of unconquerable might,
Impels me to the tomb.
Ah! whither can I fly,
Or henceforth where abide?
Comrades, my former fame is lost
By these last fatal deeds;
My name is sullied by ignoble spoils:
And soon the host, in vengeance doubly armed,
Shall seek my life.

Tec. Alas! that one so noble should indulge
In words, which had but waked his scorn before.

ANTISTROPHE IV.

Aj. Ye ocean-seeking streams, and sea-girt caves;

Thou grove that crowns the shore ;
 Long, long a captive have ye held me here
 Round Troy's beleaguered towers ;
 But—breathing life's free air,
 Shall hold me here no more.—Know this,
 Whoe'er can rightly judge !
 O Thou, whose limpid streams
 Adjacent flow, Scamander ! to the host
 Of Greece propitious still ;
 Know, never, never more
 Shalt thou behold the man
 (I speak a high and haughty word)
 Whose peer none ever marked
 On Trojan plains, 'mid all the host who sailed
 From Grecian realms ; but now dishonoured thus,
 Prostrate he lies.

Ch. Nor can I check, nor yet endure thy words,
 So great the evils which enclose thee now.

Aj. ³Ah me ! who ever could have deemed my name

³ "Αι, αἰ—νῦν γὰρ πάρεστι καὶ δὲς αἰάζειν ἐμὸν—Καὶ τρεῖς. The pun in this passage is altogether puerile, and unworthy of Sophocles. It will, however, bear a comparison with Shakespeare's —

“ This is Rome,
 And room enough.”—Julius Cæsar.

Should thus be proved accordant with my woes?
Well may my bosom heave repeated groans,
Such and so fatal are the ills I bear;—
I,—whose bold sire from this Idæan strand
Bore the first trophies mid the victor-host,
And with unrivalled glory sought his home;—
While I, his son, to the same Trojan plain
Proceeding, and with no inferior might,
Like deeds of conquest by my sword achieved,
By Greece dishonoured, thus ignobly die.
Yet this at least my firm conviction deems;
If still the brave Achilles lived t'award
His arms the guerdon of superior worth,
No other hand had borne the prize from mine.
And now th' Atridæ grant them to a wretch
Skilled but in wiles, and on my nobler deeds
Pour foul contempt. Had not these eyes, this mind
Beguiled by false illusions, failed my purpose,
With like decrees they ne'er had wronged another.
But now the virgin-daughter of high Jove,
In aspect stern, unconquered, when this hand
Was stretched to strike in vengeance, foiled my aim,
And o'er my soul such maddening frenzy cast,
That on these harmless herds my fury fell;
While the base foes, against my will escaped

Laugh in triumphant scorn. But when the Gods
Oppose him, e'en a coward may evade
The brave man's vengeance.—What then must I do?
I, who am clearly hateful to the Gods,
Nor less abhorred by Greece—while Troy's proud
towers,
And these her plains to me are adverse all?
This naval post forsaking, shall I leave
The sons of Atreus, and, with homeward course,
Plough the Ægean wave? Then with what eye
Could I appear in presence of my sire,
Great Telamon?—How could he brook to see
His son return, by martial spoils ungraced,
Such crown of glory as himself achieved?
This is not to be borne. Shall I then rush
Against the Trojans' rampart, and alone,
With them alone contending, first perform
Some glorious deed, and then triumphant fall?
Nay, this at least th' Atridæ would delight,
And thence it shall not be. I must explore
Some path, which to my aged sire may prove
I share the spirit of his princely line.
It shames a man to seek protracted life
Who sees no limit to encircling woes.
What joy remains, when day succeeds to day,

For a brief space at best deferring death?
 I count the man most worthless, who would feed
 His wavering soul with vain delusive hope:
 To live with glory, or with glory die
 Befits the noble. Thou hast heard my thoughts.

Cho. None will affirm, my Lord, that thoughts
 like these
 Are false and foreign to a soul like thine.
 Yet cease from wrath, and to thine anxious friends
 Display a softened spirit, and dismiss
 These galling cares.

Tec. O ! Ajax ! my dear Lord,
 No heavier woe hath man than slavery !
 I was descended from a free-born sire,
 In wealth the proudest of the Phrygian realm ;
 And now I am a slave. So Heaven ordained,
 And such the prowess of thy conquering hand.
 For this, since raised to share thy nuptial couch,
 I count thy welfare mine, and I conjure thee,
⁴By Jove, the guardian of domestic ties,

⁴ Ἐφεστίας Διὸς.—Ephesian Jupiter presided over the hearth shared in common by all who dwelt in the same house.—Potter. Compare the speech of Andromache to Hector. Il. vi. 459.

And by that couch, which binds the sacred vow ;
Ah ! leave me not a by-word and a taunt
To thine insulting foes—an easy prey
To some imperious lord. If thou wilt die
And, dying, leave me friendless—on that day,
Be well assured, by brutal force constrained,
I, with thy son, by Greece shall be consigned
To abject servitude. Thus then, perchance,
Shall some rude tyrant breathe the piercing taunt,—
“ Behold the wife of Ajax, who excelled
“ The Grecian chiefs in valour, how her lot,
“ So envied once, is changed to bitter bondage!”
Thus will they speak, while fate constrains me still ;
And words like these to thee, and to thy race,
Are fraught with foul dishonour. O revere
Thy father, thus abandoned in his age ;
Revere thy mother, who with many years
Oppressed, oft, oft implores the Gods once more
To greet her living Ajax. O my Lord !
Have pity on thy son, who, of thy care
In tender youth bereft, will pine oppressed
By faithless guardians. Such to him and me
Thou leav’st in death a legacy of woe.
Where should I look for refuge, save to thee ?
Thy conquering arms have laid my country waste,

And, for my parents,⁵ by a different doom
 Both, both are tenants of the silent grave.
 What country could requite me, chief, for thee?
 What wealth? Thou art my safety, thou alone.
 O then remember me—it ill befits
 A manly bosom to forget whence sprung
 What once it deemed delightful. Kindness still
 Gives birth to kindness. He, from whose cold breast
 Grateful remembrance fades, can never boast
 The grace and glory of a generous soul.

⁵ Σὺ γάρ μοι πατρίδ' ἤτωσας δορί,

Καὶ μητέρ' ἄλλη μοῖρα τὸν φύσαντά τε

Καθῆϊλεν Ἄϊδς θανάσιμος οἰκήτορας.

This is the passage referred to in the prefatory remarks, which, if Potter's translation be correct, would give such a decisive overthrow to our prepossessions in favour of the unfortunate Tecmessa; and, consequently, so materially diminish the interest of the drama. Following Brunck, who places the stop after μητέρ', he has—

Beneath thy conquering spear

My ruined country and my mother sunk.

We have preferred the arrangement of Lobeck and Erfurdt, who punctuate the passage as above; and by that expedient altogether evade the difficulty of supposing Ajax to be the murderer of the mother of Tecmessa. Matthiæ, vol. ii. 418, quoting the passage, reads τὸν φύσαντά με—a reading liable to great objection.

Ch. O were thine heart with pity moved, as mine,
Her words, my Lord, would win a prompt assent.

Aj. She will, indeed, command my warmest praise,
If to my bidding she will dare to yield
A due obedience.

Tec. My dear Lord, in all
Will I obey thee.

Aj. Bring me then my son
That I may gaze upon him.

Tec. In my fears
I hence removed him.

Aj. By our recent ills
Alarmed ? or wherefore ?

Tec. Lest the hapless child,
Encountering thee, should fall beneath thy hand.

Aj. That were, indeed, congenial with my fate.

Tec. And to prevent it, I have thus secured him.

Aj. I praise thy wise precaution in the deed.

Tec. Say, in what else can I obey thy word ?

Aj. Let me behold him, and address my son.

Tec. Thy trusty train protect him near the spot.

Aj. Why is his presence then so long delayed ?

Tec. My son, thy father calls thee. Of our train,
Thou, who dost bear the child, haste, bring him in.

Aj. Say, comes he at thy call, or hears thee not ?

Tec. E'en now th' attendant with his charge is nigh.

Aj. Bring, bring him hither, for he will not shrink
At the deep hue of this ensanguined carnage,
If he, in truth, can rightly call me father.

Soon should he learn the firm unbending mood
Of my proud soul, and emulate his sire.

⁶ Mayst thou, my son, be happier than thy father;
Like him in all beside; so with the base

Never shalt thou be numbered. Happy now

I may pronounce thee, since these present ills

Are all unfelt by thee. Alas! how oft,

When thought is absent, life is most serene,

* * * * *

Until thou learn to smile, and to be sad!

When thou attain this age, then must thou prove

To all thy father's foes, from what bold stock

Thou cam'st—thyself as brave. Meanwhile be nursed

By sportive breathings, fostering thy young life,

Thy tender mother's joy. Of all the Greeks

None, well I know, with hate and foul reproach

Will ever spurn thee, though bereft of me.

⁶ Disce, puer, virtutem ex me verumque laborem;

Fortunam ex aliis.—Virgil, *Æn.* xii. 434.

So bold a guardian o'er thee shall I leave
 In Teucer, who will watch thy nurture well,
 Though now, from sight afar, he hunts the foe.
 Ye, too, dear warriors, skilled to stem the wave,
 To you this common office I bequeath,
 Give him my last commands ; that he conduct
 My son to Salamis, and show him there
 To Telamon, and Eriboëa old,
 That he may be the solace of their age,
 Till they shall reach the gloomy halls of Death.
 Let not the judges of the strife, nor he,
 My deadliest foe, propose mine arms to Greece,
 The victor's prize ; Eurysaces, my son,
 Bear thou the shield, from which thou draw'st thy
 name,

Of seven tough hides compact—by hostile spear
 Unperforate, and close knit with many thongs.
 Take this, my son ; be my remaining arms
 Laid with me in the grave. And now with speed
 Bear quickly hence thy child ; close fast the house,
 Nor wail within the tent. ⁷ Tears promptly spring
 To female eyes. Shut now thy doors with speed.

⁷ Γυνὴ δὲ θῆλυ, καὶ πὶ δακρύοις ἔφυσ.—Medea, 924.

No skilful leech by potent charms can heal
The wound whose only med'cine is the sword.

Ch. I quake to hear this prompt and ardent
charge—

This language of despair—I like it not.

Tec. My Lord, my Ajax, what is thy design?

Aj. Nay, think not—ask not—prudence most be-
comes thee.

Tec. Alas! what terrors seize me: By thy child,
Yea, by the Gods, I do conjure thee, pause;
Ah, doom us not to ruin!

Aj. Thou dost wake
My heaviest wrath. ⁸What! know'st thou not that I
Owe nought of prayer or reverence to the Gods?

Tec. Speak better omens.

⁸ Nothing impious is here intended: the words of Ajax have the same signification as those of Æneas over the dead body of Pallas:

Nos juvenem exanimum, et nil jam cœlestibus ullis
Debentem, vano mœsti comitamur honore.

Potter.

We cannot concur in this opinion of Potter, into which he appears to have been led by extreme partiality for his hero. Impiety (see line 127) was a predominant feature in the character of Ajax.

Aj. Prate to those who hear thee.

Tec. Wilt thou not heed me?

Aj. Thou hast said too much !

Tec. I fear, my Lord—

Aj. Wilt ye not force her in?

Tec. Be softened, by the Gods !

Aj. Thou art bereft

Of prudence, if thou form the vain design

To shake the settled temper of my soul.

Chorus.

STROPHE I.

Famed Salamis,—thy happy shores arise,

Sublime 'mid ocean, where the wild waves war;

Thy towering cliffs the distant sail descries ;

While I, unhappy ! lingering yet afar

On Ida's pastured plain

Through long, long years remain,

Unhonoured, and by withering age opprest ;

Torn with desponding fear,

Lest darker fate severe

Dismiss my shuddering soul to Death's drear shades
unblest.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Ah me! the gallant Ajax, sunk in woes
 No art can heal, augments my anxious care;
 From Heaven's dread wrath his fatal frenzy rose;
 Whom to the combat, ever foremost there,
 My country, thou hast sent;
 Whose soul, by madness rent,
 Now in his pitying friends wakes deep dismay.
 His deeds of martial might,
 Achieved in prosperous fight,
 By Atreus' senseless sons unvalued pass away.

STROPHE II.

O when, by wasting years
 Worn down, and hoary age,
 An absent mother hears
 This act of frenzied rage;
 She will not pour the dirge of woe,
⁹Like Philomela, faint and low:

⁹ The nightingale is a favourite simile among the Latin as well as the Greek poets.

Qualis populea mœrens Philomela sub umbra

Amissos queritur foetus, &c.

Virg. Georg. iv. 511.

So Hom. Od. xix. 518.

No ; she will mourn her hapless child,
With piercing shrieks of vain despair ;
And smite her breast in anguish wild,
And rend her scattered locks of silver hair.

ANTISTROPHE III.

O happier, did he rest
In death, than thus to pine
With cureless griefs oppressed !
The Chief of lofty line
Noblest of Greece, whose wiser mood
Is now by maddening rage subdued.
Ah wretched sire ! what keen regret
Awaits thee for thy hapless son !
Plunged deep in heaviest woes, as yet
To all thy princely race, save him, unknown !

Aj. Time, in his lengthened and unmeasured
course,
Reveals things secret, and in darkness veils
The most conspicuous ; nought transcends the range
Of hope ; stern oaths, and fixedness of soul
Are each in turn subdued. I, who but now
Inflexible, like tempered steel, appeared,
Relent, persuaded by this woman's words.
I pity her, left widowed 'mid my foes ;

My son, a helpless orphan. Moved by this,
To the pure baths and pastured shores I go,
That, cleansed from all pollutions, I may shun
The fearful vengeance of the Virgin-Power.
Some yet untrodden spot will I explore
To hide this sword,—this weapon most abhorred,
Deep in the earth, where none may e'er behold,
But Night and Hell preserve it evermore.
'Twas Hector's gift, my most detested foe;
And since the hour he gave it, nought from Greece
Have I achieved of honour. Sage and true
Is the old adage, 'that a foeman's gift
Is not a gift, nor fraught with solid good.
Henceforth we'll pay meet reverence to the Gods,
And learn submission to the sons of Atreus.
They are Kings, and should be honoured. Where-
fore not?

The martial and most valiant must concede
To loftier station; thus the wintry snows
Yield to the fruitful summer. Night's dark orb
Retires from Heaven, that with his snow-white steeds
Glad Day may kindle o'er the reddening skies.
When with wild winds vexed Ocean hoarsely raves,

¹ Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.—Virg. *Æn.* 11. 49.

A gentler gale may still the storm to peace ;
And Sleep, the all-subduing, breaks the chain
Wherewith he bound, nor holds us captive ever.
Why then should we refuse to learn submission,
Since—for at length I know—² so would I hate
A foe, as one whom friendship's tie restored,
May yet unite once more ; so would I aim
To aid a friend, in action and in word,
As one yet prone to change ? Friendship, I know,
To man a faithless haven oft hath proved.
But all shall yet be well. Retire within,
And pray the Gods, Tecmessa, to bestow
A prosperous issue to my soul's desire.
Ye too, dear comrades, to your chief concede
An equal honour ; and when Teucer comes,
Tell him our will, and bid him, too, concur.
Now where Fate calls me thither must I go.
Ye but observe the bidding of your Lord ;
And soon, perchance, though now in misery sunk,
My glad release from sorrow shall ye hear.

[*Exit* AJAX.]

² Similar is the sentiment referred to by Cicero, de Amic. xvi. Compare, also, Eurip. Hippol. 253, et seqq.

Chorus.

STROPHE.

Now with love my heart is glowing ;
 Now with livelier joys o'erflowing :
 Iö, Iö, Sylvan God,
 Wanderer of the ocean-flood,
 Come, O Pan, from heights of snow,
 On ³ Cyllene's craggy brow ;
 Come, Monarch of the choir divine,
 For all the graceful art is thine :
 Come, thine own sportive dance to share ;—
 Such as on Nysa's heights of green,
 And in the Gnossian vales is seen ;—
 The dance is all my care.
 Hastening o'er th' ⁴ Icarian main,

³ Cyllene, a mountain of Arcadia, jointly patronized by Mercury, whose birth-place it was, and Pan. (Pan Deus Arcadiæ venit. Virg. Ecl. 10.) Nysa, a summit of Parnassus, the same with that mentioned in the Antigone. Gnossus, a city in Crete.

Ἐν δὲ χορὸν πόικιλλε περικλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις

Τῷ ἱκελον, ὅιον ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσσῷ εὐρέει

Δαίδαλος ἥσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ.

Il. 18. 590.

⁴ The Icarian sea, south of Icaros, on the coast of Ionia.

Royal Phœbus, Delian Power;
Thou too, in the joyous hour
Thy favouring presence deign !

ANTISTROPHE.

Mars hath changed the clouds of sadness,
To the cheerful beam of gladness :
Iö, Iö, now again,
Now, O Jove, her welcome reign
Morn resumes, and pours her light
O'er the gallies, swift in flight ;
Since of his wrath forgetful now
Ajax again the suppliant vow
To Heaven's offended Powers hath paid,
Again fulfilled each holy rite.—
Before stern Time's resistless might
All mortal strength must fade :
Nor would I of aught despair—
Since from wrath and mortal feud
Ajax to the Royal Pair
Resumes a milder mood.

Enter MESSENGER.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Mess. My friends, these tidings I would first
relate,
Teucer is present from the Mysian heights ;
Whom, while advancing midway through the host,
With stern reproach the Argive bands pursued.
When from afar they saw him, all withstood
His onward path, and, flocking round, broke forth
On every side in keen upbraiding taunts ;
From insult none refrained. “ The brother this,”
They cry, “ of that wild madman, to the host
A false convicted traitor, who shall die,
Crushed, as he merits, by o’erwhelming stones.”
Nay, to such height arose the gathering fray,
That many hands were drawing from the sheath
Their glittering swords. At length the strife was
hushed,
By wise persuasions of experienced age.
But where is Ajax, that to his own ear
These tidings I may bear—for to our Lord
Duty enjoins us to disclose the whole?

Ch. He is no more within; but late went forth
In new-born calmness, and with new design.

Mess. Alas ! Alas !

Then he, who sent me hither, gave too late
His charge, or I have loitered on my way.

Ch. What, then, is wanting of our present need ?

Mess. Teucer gave charge, that, till himself arrived,
The Chief an instant should not quit the tent.

Ch. He went, with wisest purpose, to avert,
By pious prayer, the anger of the Gods.

Mess. Such words are empty babbling, if we hold
⁵ The prescient Calchas an unerring prophet.

Ch. What ? Hath he aught foretold concerning
this ?

Mess. Thus much I know, for I was present
there.

Out of the court and council of the Kings
Calchas apart from Atreus' sons retired,
And grasping Teucer's hand, with friendly zeal,
Charged and conjured him, by whatever means
He could devise, throughout this day to keep
Ajax within his tent, nor let him range
Beyond its precincts, if he still desired
To see him living. On this day alone,

⁵ Præterea, si qua est Heleno prudentia, vati
Si qua fides.—Virgil.

He said, against him burned Athena's wrath.
 For oft, the Seer declared, unwieldy ⁶ might,
 If void of prudence, by offended Heaven
 Is crushed in ruin, when beyond his birth
 With aim too daring senseless man aspires.
 When first the Chieftain left his native isle,
 He heeded not his father's prudent charge,
 Who thus addressed him: "Seek, my son, in fight,
 To conquer, but still conquer through the Gods:"
 This was his haughty and unwise reply:
 "Father, with heavenly aid a coward's hand
 May grasp the prize of conquest; I confide
 To win such trophies e'en without the Gods."
 So lofty was his boast. Thus too once more,
 When mighty Pallas spurred him on to turn
 His reeking hand against th' opposing foe,
 He answered stern in proud and impious strain:
 "O Queen! to other Argives lend thine aid;
 No hostile might shall break where Ajax stands."

⁶ This admirable sentiment is well expressed by Horace:

Vis consilî expers mole ruit sua:

Vim temperatam Dî quoque provehunt

In majus: îdem odere vires

Omne nefas animo moventes.—Hor. Lib. iii. 4.

By words like these he roused to ruthless ire
Th' offended Goddess, for his spirit burned
With pride unmeet for mortals. But this day
If he survive, then, with celestial aid,
We yet may save him. Thus the Prophet spake ;
And Teucer bade me from the council bear
These weighty mandates for thy prompt observance.
If here our purpose fail, and Calchas prove
A faithful prophet, Ajax is no more !

Ch. Wretched Tecmessa, born to bitterest woe,
Come forth, and listen to these news of ill—
Torn from the root are now thy transient joys.

Tec. Who calls a hapless wretch, scarce resting yet
From unexhausted ills, to quit her seat ?

Ch. Hear from this man, what tidings he reports
Of Ajax ; terror seized me as I heard.

Tec. Ah me ! what say'st thou ?—are we then
undone ?

Mess. Thy fate I know not ; but for Ajax' doom,
If he have left his tent, no hope I feel.

Tec. He hath indeed ; and therefore at thy words,
Fear steals upon my soul !

Mess. 'Tis Teucer's charge,
He should be closely watched, nor left alone
To wander forth.

Tec. And where is Teucer, say ;
And wherefore charged he thus ?

Mess. E'en now he comes.
But oh ! I tremble, lest this sad event
Be but the prelude to the fall of Ajax.

Tec. Unhappy me ! And who informed thee thus ?

Mess. The Prophet-son of Thestor, that this day⁷
Would bring or certain death, or life secure.

Tec. Ah me ! lend, lend, O friends, your prompt-
est aid

In this sad crisis : some with speed repair
To hasten Teucer's coming ; some explore
The western hills ; the eastern some ; to track
Th' ill-omened path of your devoted Lord.

Alas ! he hath deceived me. Well I know
He loves me not as he was wont to love.

Ah me ! What shall I do, my son ?—No time
Is this to linger. Thither will I go

Where'er my strength avails. Away ! Away !
Now is their time to act, who fain would snatch

From death the man, who only hastes to die.

Ch. I am prepared ; nor will I show my zeal

⁷ This day or makes me, or undoes me quite.

In empty words ; the swift unlingering course,
And the prompt deed shall follow on my speech.

[*Exeunt* CHORUS and TECMESSA.

SCENE *changes, and discovers* AJAX *bending over*
*his Sword.*⁸

Aj. Now stands the murderous sword, where it may
pierce
Most deeply—(had I thought in such an hour
To reason idly thus)—'Twas Hector's gift,
Of strangers ever most abhorred by me,
And to my sight most hateful. In the soil
Of hostile Troy 'tis rooted, sharpened late
To pierce more promptly. I have well prepared
And fixed it deep, to yield a speedy death,
And thence to Ajax prove his kindest friend.
Thus far 'tis well arranged. Next, mighty Jove !

⁸ Here is a violation of the unity of place, which has been censured by some writers ; but it is essential to the machinery of the piece. Similar instances are found in the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, and the *Alcestis* of Euripides ; and, even were it not so, still, as Potter justly remarks, the single speech of Ajax over his sword is of more value than all the unities.

Thy grace, as is most meet, I now implore,
 Nor will I ask thee for an ample boon.
 Send one who may in Teucer's ear report
 The evil tidings, that he first may bear
 My corpse, yet reeking from the sword, away,
 Lest by some foe discovered, I am cast
 To dogs and birds a vile dishonoured prey.
 This, Jove, I ask of thee.—I next invoke
 'Th' infernal Hermes, guide of parted souls,
 That he would soothe me gently to repose;
 And grant, when this keen sword has pierced my
 side,
 A prompt and painless passage to the shades.
 I next invoke to aid me those dread Powers,
 For ever virgins, and of mortal wrongs
 For ever conscious, swift in keen pursuit,
 The awful Furies, to attest my doom,
 By the base sons of Atreus basely slain,
 And plunge the traitors in an equal fate.
 As they behold my blood, by mine own hand
 Poured forth, so be their best-loved children's hands

9 Tu pias lætis animas reponis

Sedibus, virgaque levem coerces

Aurea turbam, &c.—Hor. lib. i. 10

Embrued in their's—thus ¹⁰ self-destroyers too.
 Come, ye Avenging Furies, swift and stern,
 Quaff their warm blood, nor spare the peopled
 host.—

Thou, too, whose car o'er yon bright Heaven is
 borne,

Look down, O Sun! upon my native land;
 Relax thy golden reins, and deign to bear
 The joyless tale of misery and of death,
 To my sad mother and my aged sire.

Unhappy Queen! soon as the tale she hears,
 What complaints through all the city will she pour!—
 Yet idly thus to sorrow nought avails;
 Let the bold deed at once be dared and done.

O Death! stern Death! approach, regard me now,
 Soon shall I hold a nearer converse with thee.

Thee, car-borne Sun sublime, for the last time,
¹ Thee, glorious beam of the resplendent day,

¹⁰ It is well known, that to die by the hand of one's own children was accounted among the Ancients a species of suicide.

¹ It was a general custom among the Ancients to invoke the Sun, as a witness of their sufferings:—

Esto nunc Sol testis, et hæc mihi terra precanti
 Quam propter tantos potui perferre labores,
 Et Pater Omnipotens, &c.—Virg. *Æn.* xii. 176.

I now invoke, to hail no more for ever!
O light—O soil of Salamis beloved,
My father-land! O dear paternal hearth,
Thou noble Athens, and my loved compeers—
Ye founts, ye rivers, and ye Trojan plains,
Which long have here sustained me—Ajax breathes
This parting word, a long and last farewell;—
Next shall I commune with the shades of Hell.

[*Falls upon his sword.*]

SCENE opens and discovers Chorus divided into Two
Parties, seeking AJAX.

1st *Semich.* Toil but increases toil. Where,
where, O where
Hath not my search explored?
And yet no spot his latent path reveals.
Hist!—hist! I hear a sound.

2d *Semich.* From us it came, thy mates in com-
mon search.

1st *Semich.* What tidings do ye bring?

2d *Semich.* We traversed all the western naval
camp.

1st *Semich.* What have ye found?

2d Semich. Enough of toil—but nought in sight
beyond.

1st Semich. Nor yet to me, in all mine eastward
—course,
Appeared a vestige of the man we seek.

— STROPHE.

Ch. Who then, O who of all the ² Powers ma-
rine,
Holding his sleepless watch, intent on toil—
Which of th' Olympian host, or who that dwells
By Bosphorus' torrent streams,
If he hath marked the high-souled chief,
Will tell me where he roams?
Unwelcome task for me
³ Worn down with age and weakness, wandering
thus,
To lead a tedious search, nor trace

² Ἀλῖαδᾶν.—Some render this “the laborious fishermen;” we read ἀλιᾶδων, and incline to consider it referring to the Marine Gods, particularly as used in opposition to Ὀλυμπιαδων, which last Herman proposes as the true reading for Ὀλυμπιαδᾶν.

³ Ἀμεινηνόν.—Musgrave, referring this word to Ajax, proposes to read μεμνηνός. The Choregus, however, evidently refers to himself, as being an old man.

The frenzied wanderer's path !

Tec. Ah me ! ah me !

Ch. What groans are echoing from th' adjacent grove ?

Tec. Wretch that I am !

Ch. The captive of his spear—his hapless bride, Tecmessa, bowed in anguish I behold.

Tec. I am undone, my friends, destroyed—undone.

Ch. What dost thou mean ?

Tec. Here lies our Ajax, slain with recent wound, Pierced by the fatal sword, too well concealed.

Ch. Woe, woe for my return !—
Thus dying, Prince beloved, me too,
Thy comrade hast thou slain—
Ah me ! unhappy me !
More wretched, lady, thou !

Tec. Since such his doom, 'tis time indeed to wail !

Ch. Say, by whose hand the hapless chieftain died ?

Tec. His own—his own, 'tis evident—for the sword,
Deep fixed in earth, on which he fell, confirms it.

Ch. Ah ! my unhappy doom !

How didst thou sink in death alone,
 By friends unguarded all,
 While I—O most unthinking—most unwise,
 Slept negligent—Where, where
 Lies the unbending chief,
 Ajax of hapless name?

Tec. ⁴ Thou must not gaze upon him. I will fold
 This ample robe around his lifeless form;—
 Alas! no friendly eye could bear to look
 On the wide nostril, spouting sable gore,
 On the wide wound his own fierce hand hath made.
 What shall I do? What friend shall bear thee
 hence?

Where, where is Teucer?—How will he arrive,
 Would he but come indeed, in time to pay
 The last sad duties to a brother's corpse!
 Ill-fated Ajax, man of matchless mould,
 Such are thy miseries, as might wring the tears
 Of prompt compassion from a foeman's eye.

⁴ This is an extremely delicate and accurate touch of nature. So tender was the affection of Tecmessa for her murdered Ajax, that she could not endure even his dead body to become an object of horror or disgust. The dying Hippolitus appears to have been conscious of a similar feeling:—

Κρύψον δὲ μὲν πρόσωπον, ὥς ταχὺς, πέπλοις.

ANTISTROPHE.

Ch. This was thy purpose then, thy purpose this,
O thou of firm and unrelenting soul !
By resolute death to end thy boundless toils.—
Such were in night's mid gloom,
In day's broad splendour, such thine anguished
groans,
On Atreus' race abhorred
Invoking curses dire.
That instant was the source of all our woes,
When they proposed for valour's meed
Achilles' radiant arms.

Tec. Unhappy me !

Ch. That grief, I know, lies deep within thy
breast.

Tec. Ah me ! ah me !

Ch. I marvel not at thine incessant groans,
Lady, but now of one so dear deprived.

Tec. Thou canst but think—'tis mine to feel too
deeply.

Ch. I own it.

Tec. Ah me ! my son, what yoke of bondage
base
Must we endure ; what haughty Lord obey ?

Ch. Alas ! thou hast recalled
⁵ The dark unutterable deed
 Of the stern kings, unmoved
 In this our agony—
 May Heaven avert the blow !

Tec. It had not fallen thus, but Heaven decreed.

Ch. Woes far too heavy have the Gods imposed.

Tec. Yet such affliction for Ulysses' sake,
 Jove's hostile daughter, stern Athena, sends.

Ch. The Chief of many toils
 In his dark soul will doubtless mock
 Our tears with bitterest scorn,
 And laugh insulting at the woes we bear
 For deeds in frenzy wrought !
 So, too, the Brother-Kings
 Hearing the welcome tale.

Tec. And let them laugh exulting in his woes ;
 Perchance, though living, they revered him not,
 In battle's hour they may lament him dead.
 The fool, though grasping in his hand a prize,

⁵ " *Ἀναυδον*.—This word, according to Musgrave, generally signifies *mutum*, *taciturnum* ; he, consequently, proposes to reject it, and read *αναίδων*. This, however, is unnecessary, since, as Erfurdt observes, it denotes the same with *αναίδητος* and *αναίδης*, *infandum*.

Heeds not its value, till 'tis lost for ever.
 More bitter was his death to me than sweet
 To them ; but joyous to himself :—the death
 He prayed for—wished for—now hath closed his
 woes.

How then can they insult a doom like this ?
 'Twas by the Gods he perished, not by them.
 Let then Ulysses vent his empty taunts.
 They have no longer Ajax—while to me,
 Dying, he leaves dejection and despair.

Teu. Alas ! alas ! [within.

Ch. Hist ! for I seem to hear the voice of Teucer,
 Uttering deep groans, accordant with our ills.

Enter TEUCER.

TEUCER, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

Teu. O dearest Ajax,—O most honoured brother !
 Hast thou then perished e'en as rumour tells ?

Ch. Yes, Teucer ; thou must hear the mournful
 truth :

He is no more !

Teu. Ah miserable me !

What heaviest grief is this?

Ch. In woes like these—

Teu. Unhappy—most unhappy!

Ch. 'Tis well to weep.

Teu. O most disastrous doom!

Ch. Aye! too disastrous, Teucer.

Teu. Wretched man!

But say, what of his son? Where is he now,
In Trojan ground?

Ch. Alone, within the tents.

Teu. Fly then, and bring him hither to our pre-
sence;

Lest some fierce foe secure him, as the whelp
Of the forsaken lioness. Away!

Be prompt, assist him. All are prone to tread
Upon departed greatness.

Ch. While the life

Still warmed his breast, it was his latest charge,
That thou shouldst guard, as now thou guard'st,
his son.

Teu. O sight of all that ever met mine eye,
Most fraught with anguish! O ill-omened path
That led me here, of all I ever trod,
Tending to pangs that wound my heart most
deeply;

When first I heard thy fate, beloved Ajax,
Swift I pursued, and tracked thy steps in vain.
A sad report of thee, as by some God,
Was quickly blazoned through the Argive host,
That thou hadst perished ; I in sorrow heard,
Deep groaning, though afar ; I see it now,
And sink in heavier anguish. Come, remove
The veil, that I may witness all my woe.
O sight of horror !—wild excess of rage !
How many woes thy death has sown for me !
Ah whither, to what people can I fly,
I, in thy need who was not nigh to aid thee ?
Will Telamon, thy father and mine own,
Meet me with smiling brow and favouring heart,
Unaccompanied by thee ? How should he thus,
Who smiled not, e'en when better fortune crowned
me ?

What will he hide ? What keen upbraidings
spare ?

Will he not brand me as the base-born child
Of bondage, who, through mean, unmanly, fear,
Betrayed thee, dearest Ajax ; or through fraud,
That by thy death exalted, I might win
Thy kingdom for mine heritage ? Thus incensed,
By nature wrathful, and morose with age,

My sire will vent th' unmerited reproach ;
 And last,⁵ an outcast from my native land
 Shall I be thrust ; accounted as a slave
 Unmeet for freedom. This at home awaits me ;
 While stern and many are my foes at Troy,
 My aids but few and feeble. All these ills
 Thy death, my brother, hath on me imposed.
 Ah me ! what shall I do ? How shall I tear
 Thy corpse, unhappy, from this deadly sword,
 Whose point hath shed thy life-blood ? Didst thou
 know
 Hector, himself no more, would cause thy ruin ?
 Mark, by the Gods ! these hapless heroes' fate.
 Bound by the very belt which Ajax gave
 To the swift chariot, Hector breathed his last ;
 He, too, possessing Hector's fatal gift,

⁵ This presage of Teucer was verified by the event, as he was, on his return from Troy, expelled from Salamis by his indignant father.

Teucer Salamina patremque
 Cum fugeret.

Hor. Od. vii. lib. 1.

Atque equidem Teucrum memini Sidona venire
 Finibus expulsum patriis, nova regna petentem.

Virg. Æn. i. 619.

By it hath perished with a mortal wound.
Did not some Fury forge that sword, and Death,
A stern artificer ! that baldrick weave ?

These, then, I ween, the Gods for man ordain ;
These, and each strange vicissitude of life.

If others think not thus, let them adhere
To their own sentence ; I am fixed in mine.

Ch. Forbear thy plaints ; bethink thee how t'
entomb

Thy brother's corpse in earth, and how reply.

I see a foe approaching, who perchance
Comes, like a ruffian, to insult our woes.

Teu. Whom of the host advancing dost thou see ?

Ch. 'Tis Meneläus, in whose cause we sailed
From Greece.

Teu. I see him ; he is near us now,
And may be promptly known.

Enter MENELAUS.

MENELAUS, TEUCER, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

Men. Ho ! thee I call.

Raise not that lifeless body with thy hands,

But leave it as it lies.

Teu. Why dost thou speak
In terms so haughty?

Men. Thus have we decreed;
And thus th' imperial chieftain.

Teu. Wilt thou say
What plea thou bring'st to justify the deed?

Men. Because, when we had trusted from his
home

He came to Greece a friend and firm ally,
Soon in the chief we found a deadlier foe,
Than e'en the adverse Trojans;—who conspired
The death of all our army, and by night
Rushed forth to slay us with insidious spear;
And, but some God his frenzied madness foiled,
Ours must the doom have been that now is his;
And we had perished by as base a death,
While he survived; but Heaven reversed the wrong,
And on the senseless herds his fury fell.

⁶Wherefore be none so potent, as to hide

⁶ This brutality was too common among the ancients. It was the privation of sepulchral honours that embittered the last moments of the dying Hector; and Turnus, while he will not directly supplicate for life, implores at least this boon.

His breathless body in a decent tomb ;
But, cast unhonoured on the yellow sand,
A prey to ravening sea-birds let it lie.
Nor thou at this indulge unlicensed rage.
If, while he lived, our righteous rule he scorned,
At least in death our sway shall reach him now,
Constrained, though thou withstand, by mightier
force.

Living, he never hearkened to my word,
And stubborn soul it speaks, when men ungraced
With power, are backward to obey their Masters.
Laws in a state could ne'er be well observed,
Unless enforced by salutary fear ;
Nor will an army bend submiss to sway,
Unchecked by reverence, and by dread unawed.
Man should reflect, though strong in corporal
might,
A trivial ill may work his future ruin.
When fear is blended with ingenuous shame,
The man, of both observant, is secure.

Et me, seu corpus spoliatum lumine mavis,

Redde meis.

This passage conveys no very favourable opinion of the husband of Helen, and the brother of the King of Men.

Thyself another's subject,—not the chief
Of all,—that thou shouldst thus o'er Ajax lord :
Rule where thy sway is owned, and lofty vaunts
On thine own vassals vent ; but for this man,—
Though thou, or e'en thy brother-chief forbid,—
I will entomb him with funereal rites,
Thine idle threats disdaining. For thy wife
He did not serve in battle, like the tribes
Compelled to join the mercenary war ;
But by the oath himself had sworn constrained,
Not for thy sake. He ne'er esteemed the worthless.
Go then,—bring many heralds in thy train,—
Bring e'en the imperial chief ; thy clamorous threats
Shall never move my purpose, while thou art
What now I know thee.

Ch. Nay, I cannot praise
Such vehemence, while woes are thick around us.
Reproach like this, though just, severely wounds.

Men. This archer thinks not meanly of himself.

Teu. No! 'twas no vain nor worthless art I learned.

Men. Great were thine insolence, didst thou
wear a shield !

⁷ Go ;—show your slaves how choleric you are,
And make your bondmen tremble.

Teu. ⁸ Defenceless thus I would not shrink from
thee,
Though cased in panoply.

Men. Thy words indeed
Bespeak a doughty soul.

Teu. Conscious of right
The soul may proudly soar.

Men. Is it then right
To grace with honour the base wretch who slew me?

Teu. Slew thee? O wondrous! slain and yet
alive?

Men. The Gods preserved my life,—in his intent
I died.

Teu. Then dare not thou despise the Gods,
Thus by the Gods preserved.

Men. What, do I scorn
The laws of Heaven?

⁸ *Ψιλός*: the *ψιλὸι* wore no defensive armour, and were inferior in dignity to the *οπλιῖται*. Bowmen were accounted the least honourable of warriors, as we learn from the reproach of Diomed to Paris, in the eleventh Iliad.

Thrice armed is he that hath his quarrel just;

And he but naked, though locked up in steel,

Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

Shakspeare, Henry VI.

Teu. Yes ; if thou wilt not grant
The dead a tomb.

Men. I will not grant my foe
A sepulchre,—such grace would ill become me.

Teu. Did Ajax ever beard thee as a foe ?

Men. I hated him because he hated me ;
To this thou art no stranger.

Teu. Aye, by him
A false and fraudulent voter wert thou proved.

Men. This from the umpires, not from me, arose.

Teu. For many wiles canst thou in secret frame.

Men. These words shall cost thee sorrow.

Teu. None so keen
I deem, as that I have imposed on thee.

Men. One word I speak. He must not be en-
tombd.

Teu. In one I answer. He *shall* be entombd !

Men. I once beheld a man of daring speech,
Who, while the heavens grew dark, enjoined the
crew

To spread their swelling sails ; but when the storm
Infuriate raged, his voice was heard no more ;
Then, in his cloak enfolded, every foot
At will might trample o'er his prostrate form.
So thine offensive clamours will be checked,

When from a little cloud the mighty storm
Shall burst in wrath, and curb thy lengthened vaunts.

Teu. I too have seen a man, by folly swoln,
Who laughed insulting at a neighbour's woe.
One like myself beheld him, and in wrath,
Resembling mine, such words as these returned ;
“ Presume not, mortal, to insult the dead.
If thou persist, know, certain vengeance waits
thee.”

So he, thus present, warned th' insensate foe.
I see him now ; he is, or much I err,
No other than thyself. Say, speak I now
In parables obscurely ?

Men. I depart.

It ill beseems the man to threat in words,
Who has the power by force to work his will.

Teu. Away ;—I too esteem it foul reproach
Idly to babble with a fool like thee.

[*Exit MENELAUS.*

TEUCER, CHORUS.

Ch. Some strife of dire contention must arise.
But, Teucer, haste thee to explore

Some cave, where Ajax may repose
In his sepulchral dwelling, to mankind
An ever-memorable name !

Teu. Mark, too, in season for our task most meet,
His wife and son are present, to assist
The obsequies of the unhappy dead.
Come hither, child, and, standing near the corpse,
A suppliant, touch the sire who gave thee life.
And sit imploring there, fast in thy hand
Grasping my hair, thy mother's, and thine own,
The suppliant's treasured prayer. If of the host
One but presume to force thee from the dead,
Let that vile wretch on earth unburied lie,
And from the root for ever be he plucked
With all his race, as I cut off this hair.
Take it, my child,—preserve it,—from this spot
Let none constrain thee,—to thy sire cling fast.
Ye too, not women in the garb of men,
Stand close around, and aid him till I come,
Forbid who may, our Ajax to entomb.

[*Exit* TEUCER.]

Chorus.

STROPHE I.

What then shall be the bound? O where

Shall close the train of wandering years,
 Which ever fraught with restless care,
 With martial toils, and ceaseless fears,
⁹At Troy detains me yet,—a name
 To Greece of woe and darkest shame!

ANTISTROPHE I.

O! had he first dissolved in air,
 Or sought our common home, the grave,
 Who taught these hateful arms to bear,
 And the ¹⁰sad boon to Hellas gave.
 O toils of toils prolific still!
 He wreaked on man man's deadliest ill.

STROPHE II.

He gave me not the crown to twine,
 Or quaff the sparkling bowl;
 To revel in the generous wine,
 To raise the dulcet strain divine,

⁹ *Ἐργώδῃ Τροίαν*—*ἐργώδῃ*, properly *squalidam*, *sordidam*. But Troy was remarkable for its magnificence. We may either refer the epithet to the low and marshy plains about Troy, or adopt Lobeck's conjecture of *ἐργυεδῇ*.

¹⁰ *Κοινὸν Ἄστυ*, *communem noxam*.—Musgr. Rather, *bellum quod sociatis viribus gerunt*.

Or melt, while night's mid splendours shine,
In blissful love's control.

To love, sweet love, I wake no more ;

But 'cheerless lie on this bleak shore,

While aye o'er mine unsheltered head

The damp chill dews of Heaven are shed,

Sad Troy's memorials sole !

ANTISTROPHE II.

Till now from fears that frown by night,

Or darts that wound by day,

My shield was Ajax, stern in fight ;—

He yields to some loathed Dæmon's might—

And now o'er me what new delight

Shall beam its genial ray ?

O that I stood on that proud steep

Which beetles o'er the maddening deep,

Where ² Sunium rears its lofty shore ;—

Then, sacred Athens, might I pour

To thee a livelier lay !

¹ 'Αμέριμνος, for πολυμέριμνος. It may, however, be translated *neglectus*.

² Sunium was a promontory of Athens, at the extremity of Attica : there was a small port and town, near which Minerva had a splendid temple.

Re-enter TEUCER.

TEUCER, TECMESSA, EURYSACES, CHORUS.

Teu. I hurried back, for I perceived our chief,
Stern Agamemnon, hither bend his steps.
No mild address his lowering brow portends.

Enter AGAMEMNON.

AGAMEMNON, TEUCER, TECMESSA, EURYSACES,
CHORUS.

Agam. Do they then tell me thou hast dared to
vent
Reproach on us, and thus unpunished too,
Thou, the base offspring of a captured slave?
Had but thy mother sprung from noble race,
How high had been thy vaunts, how fierce thy pride,
Since, weak thyself as nothing, thou dost strive
For one who now is nothing; and hast vowed
That nor commanders of the Grecian host,

Nor of the fleet, nor e'en thyself, we came ;
But Ajax, as thou said'st, to Ilion sailed
His own sole sovereign. Is't not foulest shame
To hear such vauntings from a slave like thee ?
And in whose cause hast thou so proudly cla-
moured ?

Where hath he met, or where withstood the foe,
And I have shrunk or trembled ? Hath our Greece
Through all her hosts no men, save him alone ?
In evil hour, it seems, did I proclaim
To Greece the contest for Achilles' arms,
If Teucer brand me in each place a villain ;
And ye, the conquered, will not yield the prize,
When by the umpires' general voice assigned ;
But still pursue us with reproaches keen,
And, when defeated, secret treasons frame.
Did acts like these prevail, no laws could stand
On firm and lasting basis, should we wrest
His guerdon from the victor, and award
The proud pre-eminence to grace the vanquished.
But this must be restrained. Not corporal might,
Nor sinewy frame on firmest footing stands ;
The wise and prudent are the prosperous still.
By a small lash in its appointed path
The mighty ox is unresisting led.

Nay, o'er thee too, such medicine I perceive
Stealing, unless a wiser mood return,
Who for what once was man, but now a shade,
Dost brawl, and give free license to thy tongue.
Wilt thou not bend submissive—wilt not own
Thine abject baseness, and bring hither one
Of freeborn race to speak while thou art silent?
How should I catch the purport of thy words,
Who am not practised in barbaric tongue?

Ch. O that a soul more temperate dwelt in both!
I know not what to wish more meet for either.

Teu. ³Alas! how soon the service of the dead
Fades from remembrance, and is all effaced,
If this vain man so lightly deems of thee,
My Ajax, nor accords the slightest grace
To one whose life so often in the field
Hath on his cause been perilled! All thy deeds
Are swept unheeded from his memory now.
Thou, of so many and such senseless words,
Say, hast thou no remembrance, when enclosed

³ But yesterday the name of Cæsar might
Have stood against the world; now lies he there,
And none so poor to do him reverence.

Within your rampart, arms availing nought,
 Alone he stemmed the tide of adverse war,
 And singly brought deliverance ; when the flame
 Curled round the ships, and lightened o'er the
 fleet,
 What time your naval trench stern Hector leaped
 Impetuous on the host ? Who checked him then ?
 Whose bold emprise was this ? Was it not his,
 Who ne'er, thou say'st, his fearless foot advanced ?
 Nay, more ; with Hector matched in single strife
 By lot, and unconstrained, undaunted he
 Went forth to meet him, casting in the midst
 No fraudulent lot, no ⁴ clod of kneaded clay,
 But that which bounding and elastic sprung
 From out the crested helmet. Such the deeds
 Of this bold chief. I, too, was present there,
 This slave, this barbarous mother's baseborn child.
 Wretch, with what view this insult didst thou aim ?
 Dost thou not know, the father of that sire

⁴ Allusion is here made to the artifice practised by Cresphontes, at the division of Peloponnesus among the Heraclidæ, that Messenia might fall to his share. Probably, however, some stratagem actually practised by Menelaus is also referred to. See page 155.

Who gave thee life, was Pelops, of old time
A barbarous ⁵ Phrygian, and thy father too
Was Atreus, vilest, guiltiest of mankind,
Who his own brother at a banquet lured
On his own sons to feed; thy mother, too,
A Cretan, whom the sire that gave her life
Cast with her paramour to the wild waves,
Food for the ravening monsters of the main?
Born of such lineage, canst thou scorn *my* birth,
Sprung from a noble sire, great Telamon,
Who, best and bravest of the host approved,
Took for the partner of his nuptial couch
My mother—⁶ her, too, born of royal race,
Daughter of high Laomedon?—such meed,
By valour earned, to him Alcides gave.

⁵ Rather, a Lydian. The difference, however, is not material, as the boundaries of Phrygia and Lydia, which were adjacent provinces, cannot be accurately defined. Aërope, the mother of the Atridæ, (who were the grandsons, not the sons, of Atreus,) was condemned to be thrown into the sea, on account of her infidelities, but preserved, and given in marriage to Plisthenes, the son of Atreus.

⁶ Hesione, daughter of Laomedon, whom Hercules, having rescued from a sea-monster, gave in marriage to his friend and associate, Telamon.

Shall I, thus noble, and from parents sprung
Thus noble, cease my kinsman to revere,
Whom, prostrate in such miseries, thou wouldst
leave
Unsepulchred, nor blushest at the word?
But know thou well, if thou shalt cast him forth,
Thou wilt cast forth us three, who kneel beside him.
'Tis better far, in honourable toil,
To die with glory in my kinsman's cause,
Than for thy wife's or for thy brother's sake.
Enough—see not mine interest, but thine own.
If thou dost work me wrong, ere long thou'lt wish
E'en coward fear had curbed thy wrath to me.

Enter ULYSSES.

ULYSSES, AGAMEMNON, TEUCER, TECMESSA,
EURYSACES, CHORUS.

Ch. In season, O King Ulysses, art thou come,
So thou wilt quench, and not inflame the strife.

Ulys. What is it, soldiers? from afar I heard
Th' Atridæ clamorous o'er the hero's corpse.

Agam. Have we not heard rude and unseemly words,

O Prince Ulysses, from this man before thee?

Ulys. What words? I blame not him, who, when he hears

Upbraidings keen, in haughty tone replies.

Agam. Such he hath heard; for such his deeds deserved.

Ulys. Why, what hath he achieved, to work thee wrong?

Agam. He will not leave this body unentombed; But will, he says, in my despite inter it.

Ulys. May, then, a friend presume to speak the truth,

Yet, as before, thy hearty friendship share?

Agam. Speak; I were senseless to forbid thy words,

Whom of all Greece I count my firmest friend.

Ulys. Then hear me. Do not unrelenting thus, By the great Gods, cast noble Ajax forth Unsepulchred, nor let ungoverned wrath Subdue thy calmer mood, and urge thee on Thus, in thy hate, to trample upon justice. In all our host, he was my deadliest foe,

Since first Achilles' glorious arms were mine ;
Yet him, of soul thus adverse, in such scorn
I never can account, as to deny
Here lies the bravest of the Greeks who came—
Except Achilles—to the Trojan towers ;
Thus to degrade the chief would shame thyself.
Not him alone, but Heaven's eternal laws,
Wouldst thou contemn. Unjust it is to wrong
The brave in death, though most abhorred in life.

Agam. Dost thou, Ulysses, in his cause with-
stand me ?

Ulys. I do. I did but hate him while my hate
Was sanctified by honour.

Agam. Shouldst thou not
Insult the lifeless corpse ?

Ulys. Rejoice not thou,
O son of Atreus, in ignoble triumphs.

⁷ This earth, that bears thee dead,
Bears not alive so brave a gentleman.
If thou wert sensible of courtesy,
I should not make so great a show of zeal,
But let thy favours hide thy mangled face.
Adieu ! and take thy praise with thee to Heaven.

Shakspeare, *Hen. IV.*

Agam. No easy task is piety to Kings.

Ulys. Kings should give way to sage and prudent friends.

Agam. The virtuous man should yield to those who rule.

Ulys. Cease ; vanquished but by friends, thou still art victor.

Agam. Remember well to whom such grace thou giv'st.

Ulys. He was my foe, but still most truly noble.

Agam. What wilt thou then ? Why dost thou thus revere

A foe departed ?

Ulys. On his virtue more I dwell, than on my hatred.

Agam. By mankind, Those who thus reason oft are counted senseless.

Ulys. They who are friendliest now, ere long may turn
To bitterest foes.

Agam. And wouldst thou make or praise
Such friends ?

Ulys. I praise not unrelenting souls.

Agam. This day as cowards wilt thou brand us
both!

Ulys. Nay, but th' assembled Greeks will laud
your justice.

Agam. Thou dost persuade me then t' entomb
the dead?

Ulys. Yes; for the same drear grave awaits me
too.

Agam. How promptly each fulfils, what to his
wish

Is most congenial!

Ulys. What becomes me more
For mine own welfare than to labour thus?

Agam. This shall be called thy deed—not mine.

Ulys. As thou
Shalt do, so all men will esteem thee righteous.

Agam. Of this be well assured: such grace to
thee,

Or e'en a greater, I would promptly yield.

But he, in life or death, alike shall share

My just abhorrence. Work thy will in all.

Ch. Whoe'er, Ulysses, lightly recks of thee,
In soul and thought so noble, widely errs.

Ulys. And thus to Teucer do I now proclaim,

My friendship shall exceed my former hate.

With him I wish t' entomb the mighty dead,

Partake his labours, and ^s omit no rite

That man can pay to grace his noblest peer.

Teu. Noblest Ulysses, to thy words I yield

My warm applause; far hast thou passed our hopes;

Since thou, of Greece my brother's mortal foe,

Alone stood'st forth to aid, nor hast endured

The living thus should trample on the lifeless;

When that infuriate leader of the host,

With his most worthy brother, willed to cast

The hero forth,—unhonoured—unentombed.

For this may He who rules Olympus' brow,

Th' Eternal Sire;—may ever-wakeful Furies,

And Justice, following with unerring step,

Consign these villains to as base a doom,

As for the chief their guilty aim designed.

But thee, brave son of old Laertes, thee

I may not grant our pious task to share;

Lest such an act offend the mighty shade;

^s Let every honour to a soldier due

Attend this hero to the tomb.

In all beside befriend us. If thou send
Some from the host our funeral task to aid,
It will not be unwelcome. On my care
All other rites devolve ; and know, I deem
Thy deeds to us have been most truly noble.

Ulys. My will had been to aid thee ; since in this
To share thy toil be less congenial deemed,
I go, assenting promptly to thy thought.

[*Exit* ULYSSES.]

TEUCER, TECMESSA, EURYSACES, CHORUS.

Teu. Enough ; much time is now consumed.
For you, let some with duteous hand
The hollowed trench prepare,—some rear
The lofty tripod o'er the flame,
For due ablutions meet ; let one
Bear from the tent the Hero's arms,
And martial garb of war.
Thou, child, thy feeble strength exert ;
Raise,—softly raise,—thy sire, and lift
His side with care ; still the warm veins
Through the wide gash exhale the sable gore.

Advance, whoe'er of friendly soul
 Is nigh ;—haste, haste,—alas ! I deem
 Ne'er wilt thou this sad task perform
 For one of mortal birth more brave
 Than what was Ajax once.

Ch. How much doth sage experience teach man-
 kind.

But, ere he mark th' event, no prescient seer
 The issue of the future can foretell !

PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

SIMPLICITY, when it does not degenerate into tameness and insipidity, is among the most attractive graces of poetry; and it is less the indication of superior genius to have framed an elaborate and complicated plot, than to have erected, out of scanty and apparently inadequate materials, the superstructure of an interesting poem. Thus, the single subject of the Iliad is the anger of Achilles, with the events naturally arising out of it, and the inferiority of the Æneid to that first production of human intellect is, in no respect, more strikingly evident than in the more diffuse and complex nature of the subject. Thus, also, the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of our

Author, though unrivalled for dexterity in the management of the plot, and the developement of the catastrophe, is yet scarcely so bold and masterly an effort of genius as the drama before us; the sole argument of which is the endeavour of Ulysses to wrest, by the agency of Neoptolemus, the invulnerable arms from the custody of Philoctetes.

The story of the son of Pæas is familiar to the classical reader. Having been requited for his fidelity to the deified Hercules with the bequest of the hero's arms, he repaired with the confederate Greeks, as bound by oath, to the siege of Troy. There, either from the resentment of Juno on account of the services he had rendered to Hercules, or, as other authors relate, in consequence of the evasion of a solemn oath, by which he had bound himself never to reveal the spot where the ashes of the hero had been deposited, he received a deadly wound in his foot, from the dropping of an arrow which had been tinged with the venom of the Lernæan hydra. So noisome was the odour issuing from his wound that his removal from the camp became a measure of imperative necessity, and he was accordingly allured, by Ulysses, on board a

galley, under the specious pretence of having his wound cured by the sons of Æsculapius, and treacherously left on a desert part of the Isle of Lemnos. In this state of agony and desolation, with no witnesses of his misery but the inanimate objects around him, for which custom has taught him to cherish a kind of melancholy regard, has the unhappy exile lingered for upwards of nine years, supporting life only by the aid of his arms, and still nourishing, amidst his despair, the deadliest animosity against the traitors who had betrayed him. It is at this juncture that Ulysses and Neoptolemus, who have been deputed by the Grecian chiefs to seize and convey him to Troy, (which cannot be taken without his assistance,) arrive upon the island ;—and here commences the business of the drama.

If there be any spectacle peculiarly interesting to the observer of human nature, it is the contemplation of a generous mind reluctantly yielding to the suggestions of artifice and duplicity ; and, though seduced, for a moment, by the love of glory, into the commission of baseness, yet struggling with better feelings, till at last the native integrity

of the honourable mind rises triumphant over the arts of the deceiver. Such a character is Neoptolemus. Young, ingenuous, and upright, he recoils with indignation from the smooth sophistry of artifice and fraud—he is only reconciled to it by the specious lure of fame—he perseveres in the deceit so long as he is encouraged by the presence of his wily confederate; but when left to himself—to the silent remonstrances of conscience—the innate generosity of his heart resumes its ascendancy, nor can he consent to purchase his own glory and the welfare of Greece, at the price of his honour. We recognize in him all the lineaments of that high-souled and impetuous chief, to whom is attributed, by the Master-Poet, that memorable sentiment:—

Who dares think one thing, and another tell,
My soul detests him as the gates of hell.

Scarcely less interesting, though under a very different aspect, is the character of Philoctetes himself. The lonely exile has become familiarized to misery without being resigned to it; all around him has assumed the desolate aspect of his own forlorn condition, and yet, without any hope of

deliverance, the remembrance of his own country is the more endeared to him, as he is separated from it by a more hopeless and insuperable barrier. The 'Amor patriæ' burns inextinguishably in his heart. The very garb of Greece is beauty to his eye; the accents of a Greek are music to his ear. Absorbed as he might have been in the contemplation of his own sorrows, (and there is no teacher of selfishness like sorrow,) he has not yet forgotten his former companions and confederates in arms, and his inquiries after them are urged with a tenderness and solicitude truly pathetic. Even the misanthropic scepticism which he has imbibed is accordant with the general tone and temper of his mind; and, under such circumstances, a *heathen* may be excused for calling in question the impartiality and justice of the Gods. It was reserved for a more enlightened poet than Sophocles to deliver that beautiful aphorism—

All partial evil—universal good.

This drama, however, possesses a beauty peculiar to itself. Scenic descriptions of the utmost richness and luxuriance are, indeed, interspersed

throughout all the writings of Sophocles, but the drama before us presents by far the finest specimen of his descriptive talent. With admirable judgment he has put the delineation of the surrounding wildness and desolation into the mouth of Philoctetes, the sombre temper of whose mind would necessarily invest it with additional gloom. Indeed, throughout the whole drama, the prevailing charm is Nature; and however destitute it may be of that which is calculated to gratify the sickly and vitiated taste of a modern audience, the ravings of guilty passion, and the declamation of tumid and unnatural heroism, we do not hesitate to maintain, that so long as natural feeling, correct delineation, a lively exhibition of human character, and an intimate knowledge of the human heart, possess the power of awakening interest and exciting the affections, that power will belong, in an eminent degree, to the Philoctetes of Sophocles.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ULYSSES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

SPY, DISGUISED AS A MERCHANT.

HERCULES.

PHILOCTETES.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ulys. This is the shore of that sea-circled land,
Lemnos, ' by mortal foot untrodden still,
Uncheered by mortal dwelling—here, O son
Of great Achilles, once our mightiest chief;—

¹ It must not be inferred from this expression, that the whole island of Lemnos was uninhabited; the contrary being established by the authority of Homer, *Odyss.* viii. 283;

Λῆμνον, εὐκτίμενον πολίεθρον.

but simply that part of the coast on which Philoctetes had been left, whose range, from the nature of his wound, could not have been very extensive.

Here, Neoptolemus, in time long past,
I left the son of Pœas, Melia's lord,
At the high mandate of the brother kings;
When from his foot such noxious venom oozed,
That nor in reverent silence to the Gods
Libations could we pour, nor victims slay;
But through the camp his wild ill-boding shrieks
Incessant echoed.—Yet what need of words
Like these?—No time for tedious converse now,
Lest he detect my coming, and I lose
The train of wiles with which I think to snare him.
Now 'tis thy task my purpose to subserve,
And first seek out a cave, with double mouth
So formed, that either end in winter's chill
Receives the radiance of the genial sun;
And in the sultry summer cooling gales
Breathe through the cleft, inviting soft repose.
On the left hand thou mayst at once descry
A limpid fountain, if 'tis flowing still.
Approach in silence, and inform me first
If on this spot, or elsewhere, he resides;
That thou mayst hear, and I impart the rest
Of my design, and thus our task be shared.

Neop. No distant toil, Ulysses, dost thou give—
Methinks I see the cave thou hast described.

Ulys. Above us, or below? I see it not.

Neop. 'Tis that above—no trace of footsteps nigh.

Ulys. Look, if reclined in sleep he rest within.

Neop. To me the habitation seems devoid
Of human tenant.

Ulys. Is there nought within
Formed for domestic uses?

Neop. Yes; with leaves
The cave is strewed, as one had there reposed.

Ulys. Is all deserted—is there nought beside
Beneath the rocky roof?

Neop. A drinking cup
Of wood, by some rude workman roughly wrought;
With ² implements to rouse the dormant flame.

Ulys. The scanty store, of which thou speak'st,
is his.

Neop. Alas, alas! here, drying in the sun,
A few loose rags are laid, discoloured all
With fetid gore.

Ulys. Here then, beyond all doubt,
The man resides, nor is he distant far;

² Πυρεῖα.—This word may either signify firewood, or the implements for striking fire. The latter supposition, as appears from line 296, is the more probable.

How should a wretch, with cureless wounds diseased,
Traverse a lengthened space? Or he hath gone
To seek for food, or haply knows some herb
Lenient to soothe the anguish of his wound.
Send then this man to keep attentive watch,
Lest sudden he surprise me,—whom of Greece
He most desires within his reach to view.

Neop. Nay, he is gone, and shall observe the
path—

If thou wouldst aught beside, unfold thy will.

Ulys. Son of Achilles, it behoves thee now,
In the good cause that led thee here, to act
With firm resolve, and not in might alone;
But, when thou hear'st new schemes, untold before,
To aid my plans, since for this end thou cam'st.

Neop. What then dost thou enjoin me?

Ulys. Thou must seek
To win with wily and ensnaring arts
The soul of Philoctetes. When he asks
“Who art thou, and from whence?” reply at once
Achilles' son—this must not be suppressed.
Say thou art sailing homeward, and hast left
The naval host of Greece, with deadliest wrath
Indignant, since they lured thee from thy home
With prayers, as one to whose resistless arm

Alone should Ilion yield ;—yet, when thou cam'st
 Demanding, as thy right, Achilles' arms,
 Disdained thy righteous plea, and gave the prize
³ To grace Ulysses. Pour upon my name
 The torrent of reproach and foulest scorn ;
 Thou wilt not pain me, but in all the Greeks
 Wilt strike deep sorrow, if thou act not thus.
 For know, unless we gain his darts, in vain
 Wouldst thou essay to storm the Dardan towers.—
 Learn now the cause, why converse with the man
 To thee is sure and safe, though not to me.
 Thou sailed'st hither, bound by ⁴ oath to none—

³ The contest concerning the arms of Achilles was solely between Ajax and Ulysses ; we have no account that Neoptolemus laid claim to them. As Philoctetes, however, had been absent during the whole affair, Ulysses was at liberty to substitute Neoptolemus in the room of Ajax, especially as his being the son of Achilles naturally justified his pretensions to the arms of his father. The fiction was therefore probable.—Francklin.

⁴ The oath is related at large by Eurip. Iph. at Aul. All who engaged in this war under the obligations of this oath, that is—all who at first embarked with Agamemnon and Menelaus, were considered by Philoctetes as his enemies, in a conspiracy to expose him on that desert island. Neoptolemus was not of that number ; he therefore had not offended the deserted chief.—Potter.

By no severe necessity constrained—
Nor with our former fleet—but nought of these
By me can be denied. If with his bow
Equipped, he should perceive me, I am lost—
And by my presence should ensure thy ruin.
This, then, should first be warily contrived,
How thou mayst steal by fraudulent acts away
Th' unconquerable arms. I know, my son,
Thou com'st not of a race inured to speak
In words like these, or forge insidious wiles—
Yet think, for thee what joy to win the prize!
Dare then,—hereafter will we live to justice.
⁵ Now but for this brief day resign thy soul
To me, for once suppress thy sense of shame,
And ever after be the best of men.

Neop. If but to hear such words offends mine
ear,
Son of Laertes, how I loathe the actions!
I am not framed to play a traitor's part,
And my brave sire, Fame rumours, spurned at fraud.
I stand prepared to seize the man by force,
But not by falsehood; on one foot sustained
'Twere strange if he could match our manly might.

⁵ Da te hodie mihi.—Terence. *Adelph.* v. iii. 52.

And though, as thy confederate hither sent,
Ill should I brook the false betrayer's name ;
Yet know, O Prince, I deem it nobler far
To fail with honour, than succeed by baseness.

Ulys. Son of a noble sire, I thus in youth
‘Was ever slow in speech, and prompt in deed.
Now, taught by long experience, I have learnt
That words, not deeds, direct th’ affairs of men.

Neop. What hast thou bid me but to utter falsehood ?

Ulys. By fraud I bid thee seize on Philoctetes.

Neop. And why by treachery rather than the
means

Of fair persuasion ?

Ulys. Thou wilt ne’er persuade him,
Nor capture him by force.

Neop. What matchless might
Inspires such confidence ?

Ulys. Unerring darts
Pointed with certain death.

‘ Similar is the character drawn by Sallust, of Jugurtha, in the brighter part of his life. *Plurimum facere, et minimum ipse de se loqui.* So Shakspeare of Troilus:—

Speaking in deeds, but deedless in his tongue.

Act iv. Scene 2.

Neop. And may none dare
Ev'n to approach him?

Ulys. 'Tis most perilous,
Unless, as now I counsel, thou surprize him.

Neop. Dost thou not count it base to utter falsehood?

Ulys. No; not, at least, when falsehood leads to safety.

Neop. And with what front can one presume to speak
In words like these?

Ulys. When our advantage calls
Such scruples should be silenced.

Neop. How can this
Conduce to Ilion's downfall?

Ulys. To these darts,
And these alone, the Trojan towers can yield.

Neop. Am not I then predestined to subvert
them?

Ulys. Nor thou without these darts—nor they apart
From thee.

Neop. If it be thus, they *must* be won.

Ulys. This done, a two-fold recompense awaits
thee.

Neop. How?—tell me this and I refuse no more.

Ulys. Thou wilt be styled at once most brave and wise.

Neop. Come on—despite of shame, I will perform it.

Ulys. Dost thou remember what I late advised?

Neop. In once assenting, I remember all.

Ulys. Thou then remain awaiting his return—
I must away, lest he detect my presence;
Then to the ship ⁷ do thou despatch the spy.
Here, too, if your return be long delayed,
The same will I send forth, in pilot's garb
Disguised, and in appearance so transformed,
That to the exile he may seem a stranger.
From whom, while dubious and perplexed his
words,
Catch thou, my son, what best may suit our purpose.

⁷ Musgrave proposes in this passage to substitute ἀποστεῖλας for ἀποστελῶ. Is it not more probable that ἀποστεῖλον is the true reading? Whence would arise the necessity of disguising the σκοπὸς, if Philoctetes had never seen him before; which would be the case according to the received reading? Doubtless, Neoptolemus would need some messenger to 'report progress.'

I, trusting this to thee, will seek the ship ;
 May Hermes, God of wiles, be now our guide,
 And ⁸ conquering Pallas, Queen of rampired towns,
 Whose favouring presence evermore preserves me.

[*Exit* ULYSSES.

NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Ch. My Lord, a stranger in a foreign land,
 What to the wary exile should I speak,
 Or what suppress? Instruct me thou.
 For art by art is baffled still,
 And judgement dwells in him who wields
 The sceptre of Immortal Jove.
 To thee, my son, from thy remotest line

⁸ Under the name of Νίκη Αθήνα, Minerva was worshipped in her temple on the Acropolis of Athens.—(Eurip. Ion. 1550.) She was called Πολιάς, as being the foundress of that city; though for what reason Ulysses should adopt such an appellation in addressing her, it may be difficult to discover. Her favour and protection of him are well known.

Descends such ⁹sovereign sway. Then tell me now,
How shall I aid thee here?

Neop. Now—for thou haply seek'st to trace
The spot in this far region where he lies—
Explore it boldly. When he comes—
The terrible wanderer—from the cave emerge,
And, ever watchful of my beck,
Be near to aid me, as my need demands.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Ch. Such was my care, O King, ere yet thou
 spak'st,
To keep for thine occasion heedful eye;—
But tell me now in what abode
He dwells, and where is wont to range;
For this, in sooth, 'twere timely now to learn,
Lest unawares he haply cross my path,
And thus evade my notice.—Say, what spot,
And what abode is his?—Where lies his path?—

⁹ Κράτος ὠγύγιον—potestas ab atavis. From Ogyges, a very ancient King of Attica, or of Thebes, or, as some say, of the Gods, all ancient and venerable things were called ὠγύγια. Compare Persæ Æsch. 71, (37,) 961; Eumen. 1084; Pindar Nem. vi. 75. Blomfield.

Abroad, or in the cave?

Neop. Thou sees't his drear abode, where the
cleft rock

A double entrance forms.

Ch. And whither roves the sad inhabitant?

Neop. I doubt not, but in quest of food
A path he ¹⁰ furrows, and is near us now ;
Thus, Fame reports, his joyless life
He still prolongs—with winged shafts
Smiting the forest-prey, a hopeless wretch !
And none hath ever come
To heal his festering wound.

STROPHE II.

Ch. His doom my liveliest pity wakes,
By mortal voice uncheered—
Bereft of sympathetic eye ;
But ever lonely, ever sad,
He strives with fell disease ;
And oft in utmost need unaided pines,

¹⁰ *ὀγμέυει*.—There is a peculiar beauty in this expression, which it is difficult adequately to convey in a translation.—
“ He trails his foot along so as to make a furrow in the ground.”

Cut off from every solace. How, O how
Endures the wretch through all?
O unavailing arts of men!
¹ O hapless generations of mankind,
On whom fate sternly frowns!

ANTISTROPHE II.

He, who perchance in virtue mates
The noblest of his sires,
Bereft of all that Nature needs,
Pines sad and solitary here,
¹Mid beasts that range the wood,
²And birds of painted wing. Oppressed
At once with pain and famine, he endures

¹ Perhaps there does not occur in the whole compass of ancient or modern poetry a more pathetic sentiment than that exquisite passage of Euripides, *Hipp.* 369—

Ω πονοὶ τρέφοντες βρότους.

O sorrows, ye nurses of mankind!

² Musgrave follows Stanley in referring *στικτῶν* to birds—*Cum avibus vel feris*. The expression certainly corresponds to the '*pictæ volucres*' of Virgil. It is, however, generally understood to signify *dappled* or *speckled*.—'With dappled or shaggy beasts.'

Immitigable woes;
 A sad inheritance!
 While to his deep and piercing groans
 Loquacious Echo, murmuring from afar,
 Pours forth a wilder wail!

Neop. Nought here awakens my surprise.
 If right I deem, Heaven's wrath alone
 Heaped on his head these miseries,
³ From Chryse's unrelenting wrath derived!
 Now that he pines unsolaced and alone,
 Is not without the will divine;
 Lest on the fated towers of Troy
 He hurl th' unconquered weapons of the Gods,
 Ere yet the destined hour arrive
 When those proud towers must fall.

STROPHE III.

Ch. Hush! hush, my son!

Neop. And what is this?

³ Sophocles appears here to follow that legend of Philoctetes, which relates, that having landed on the Isle of Chryse, near Lemnos, he was bitten by a serpent who guarded the shrine of Minerva, to whom he had been enjoined to sacrifice on behalf of the Greeks.

Ch. I seemed to hear a sound,
A human sound, as though of one in pain.

Neop. And distant was the voice, or near?—
It strikes—it strikes upon me! 'tis the plaint
Distinct of one who, in his path,
With anguish lingers—nor does that deep groan
Of pain escape me—though afar,
Yet loudly now it sounds!

ANTISTROPHE III.

Ch. Take yet, my son—

Neop. Inform me what?—

Ch. Fresh counsel—for the man
Is not afar, but still yon cave within—
⁴ Nor tuning there the rustic pipe
As the blithe shepherd; but on that rough path
Haply he strikes his wounded foot,
And shrieks for anguish—or descrying now
Our ship's inhospitable port;—
For dreadful are his cries!

⁴ Long ere our approaching heard within
Noise, other than the sound of dance and song;
Torment, and loud lament, and furious rage.

Paradise Lost, viii. 242.

Enter PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

Phi. Strangers, ho !

Who, who are ye, to this bleak shore impelled
By friendly port uncheered, or human home ?
Say, from what region, or what lineage sprung,
Should I pronounce you ? For the garb ye wear,
Most welcome to mine eyes, proclaims you Greeks ;
But I would hear your voices. Do not shrink
To speak in friendship to so wild a form ;
Pity a hapless, solitary man,
Deserted, and in agony. O speak,
If hither ye indeed are come as friends.
Ah deign reply—nor justly could I seek
This grace from you, nor ye from me, in vain.

Neop. First know then then, O stranger, we are
Greeks,

Since this it is thy soul desires to learn.

Phi. Thrice welcome accents ! Ah ! that I should
hear

Such greeting from such lips so long deferred !

What led thee hither, son?—what urgent need?—
What impulse swift?—what most propitious gale?
Tell me, that I may know thee, who thou art.

Neop. In sea-encircled Scyros was I born,
And now am sailing homeward. For my name—
'Tis Neoptolemus, Achilles' son.
Thou know'st the whole.

Phi. Son of a sire most dear,
^s And of a land beloved! thou youthful charge
Of aged Lycomedes, with what aim
Seek'st thou these dreary shores;—whence loosed
thy bark?

Neop. From Ilion homeward now my course I
steer.

Phi. What hast thou said? Thou wert not of
the fleet
When first to Troy our fatal course we sped?

Neop. Wert thou too sharer in that arduous toil?

Phi. And know'st thou not, my son, on whom
thou look'st?

^s Lycomedes, King of Scyros, was father of Deidamia, mother of Neoptolemus. Hence, though Phthia was his paternal inheritance, he was taught to consider Scyros as his home.

Neop. How should I know the man I never saw?

Phi. Hast thou not heard my name, nor yet the
tale

Of those unequalled woes which wrought my ruin?

Neop. Know me in all unconscious of thy doom.

Phi. O plunged in miseries, and by Heaven ac-
curst,

The rumour of whose wrongs hath never reached
My native land, nor the loved realms of Greece;—
But they, who basely thrust me into exile,
Insult my woes in silence, while my wound
For ever rankles, and my pangs increase.
My child, the brave Achilles' martial son,
I, I am he, whom haply thou hast heard,
Styled Lord of Hercules' unconquered arms,
The son of Pœas, wretched Philoctetes.—
Me, the two Chiefs, and ⁶ Cephallene's lord,
Have exiled thus, deserted, wasting still
With dire disease, engendered by the wound,
Tinged with the venom of the deadly snake;
Thus tortured, O my son, they hither brought—

⁶ The rule of Ulysses extended over the Island of Cephallene.—Homer, Il. N. 361, calls him Κεφαλλήνων ἄναξ, as in the text.

Here left me desolate ! what time they steered
From sea-girt Chrysa to this cheerless isle :
Soon as they saw me in th' o'er-arching rock
Asleep, exhausted by the boisterous wave,
The joyful sailors loosed ; but by my side,
As for some wandering beggar, first they placed
A few mean rags, and of the coarsest food
A scanty dole—such one day be their own !
⁷ Think, think, my son, from that brief broken
sleep
How sad the waking, when I gazed around,
And found my comrades fled ; what bitter tears
I vainly shed—what sighs of anguish heaved,
When I perceived the ships in which I came
Departed all—and none of mortal race
On that wild spot to aid me in my need,
Or soothe my gnawing wound. I gazed around—
Nought met mine eye but misery and despair !
And, O my son, of these how large a store !
Time lingered on, and day succeeded day,
While I, sad tenant of this narrow cave,

⁷ This whole speech is beautifully paraphrased by Fenelon, who has, indeed, interwoven nearly the entire play into his *Telemachus*, book xv.

Must toil alone. The pittance nature craved
This bow supplied, whose certain aim brought
down

The fluttering doves ;—whate'er th' unerring shaft
Struck down, to seize the prey I slowly trailed
My wounded foot in agony along.

Nay more ! when thirst required the cooling
draught,

Or wintry frosts were stiffening on the ground,
I crept from out my cave, devising schemes
To fell me fuel ; yet no flame had I—

⁸ But, striking flint on flint, I hardly wrung
The latent fire, ⁹ which cheers and warms me still.
For, with that fire, this closely-sheltered cave
Provides me all but freedom from disease.
Learn now, my son, what region thou hast reached.
This, unconstrained, no mariner draws nigh—
There is no haven here—the wave-beat crew
Find here no gain, no welcome refuge here ;

⁸ Ut silicis venis abstrusum excuderet ignem.

Virg. Geo. i. 135.

⁹ Erfurdt reads here, ὃ καὶ σώζοιμ' αἰεί—“ Which may I ever preserve.” Either sense is unexceptionable.

Nor would the prudent seek a shore like this.
 Perchance one comes reluctant—for long life
 Is fraught with much vicissitude to man ;
 And such, when they arrive, my son ! in words
 Express their pity, and some scant supply
 Of food or raiment to my wants vouchsafe ;
 But, when the boon I seek, all, all refuse
 To bear me homeward. Thus I linger now,
¹⁰ The tenth sad year, in famine and despair,
 Feeding this ever-wasting fell disease.
 These trophies grace th' Atridæ, and this deed
 Hath great Ulysses wrought, whom may the powers
 Of high Olympus with such woes repay
 As they have heaped on me !

Ch. I, son of Pœas,
 Like mariners to this wild shore impelled,
 Do pity thee.

Neop. Nay ; I too can attest
 The tenor of thy words, as one who knows
 The two Atridæ and Ulysses stamped
 With basest villany.

¹⁰ Pæne decem totis aluit Pœantius annis

Pestiferum tumido vulnus ab angue datum.

Ov. Trist. v. 2, 13.

Phi. And canst thou, too,
Charge with injustice Atreus' cursed race,
So that thy wrongs awake indignant hatred?

Neop. O could I so evince my hate in deeds,
That Sparta and Mycenæ might attest,
Our Scyros, too, the mother of bold heroes!

Phi. 'Tis bravely said; but whence that deadly
wrath
With which thou com'st incensed against the kings?

Neop. O son of Pœas, though I scarce can
brook
To speak them, I will tell thee all my wrongs—
When ruthless Fate ordained Achilles' death—

Phi. Alas! ere thou speak further, tell me this;
Is the brave son of Peleus now no more?

Neop. He died, but by no mortal hand,—the
shaft
Of mighty Phœbus struck the fatal blow.

Phi. Most noble both, the slayer and the slain.

¹ Such, at least, is the account of Homer, in the prophecy
of the expiring Hector:—

Phœbus and Paris shall avenge my fate,
And stretch thee here, before the Scaean gate.

I doubt, my son, or first to ask the tale
Of thine own wrongs, or mourn thy father's fate.

Neop. I deem for thee, unhappy as thou art,
It is enough to dwell on thine own griefs,
And not to mourn another's.

Phi. Thou speak'st rightly—
Resume thy story then, and tell me all,
Wherein the Atridæ wrought thee desperate wrong.

Neop. The bold Ulysses, and the ² Chief whose
care
Cherished my father's youth, to Scyros came
In a proud galley, ³ rich with varied store;
Saying—if true or false I cannot judge—
That, since my sire had perished, Heaven ordained
No hand, save mine, to storm the stubborn Troy.
Such was their tale, O stranger! nor long space
Did I detain them, but embarked with speed,

² Phœnix.

³ Ποικιλοστόλω.—Commentators differ as to the precise signification of this word. It may either denote well-equipped, or many-coloured. Musgrave's conjecture is more ingenious than judicious, who interprets it, 'manned with sailors of different nations.'

Urged more than all by fondness for the dead,
To see him ere entombed, on whom, in life,
It ne'er was mine to look. Next urged me, too,
A worthy motive, e'en the thirst of fame,
To go, and raze the lofty towers of Troy.
When on my course the second morn arose,
And to the loathed Sigæum with swift oars
I steered, around me, soon as disembarked,
Flocked the whole host with greeting—vowing all
That in his son Achilles yet survived.

Alas ! he lay in death ! I—doomed to woe—
When o'er his corpse some natural tears had fallen,
Sought the Atridæ, whom I deemed my friends,
Claiming my father's arms, with all he had.

Ye Gods ! with what base insult they replied—

“ Son of Achilles, all thy father's wealth

“ Is granted to thy claim, all, save his arms.

“ They grace another, e'en Laertes' son.”

I, bathed in tears, indignantly rejoined,

“ And have ye dared, injurious ! to award

“ My father's arms, ere mine assent obtained ?”

Ulysses, for he stood close by, replied :—

“ Nay, youth, in justice gave they those bright
arms

“⁴ To me, who saved them and their master’s
corpse.”

I, fired to madness, answered with reproach,
And called down every curse upon their heads,
If he should dare bereave me of mine arms.

He, thus reviled, though ever slow to wrath,
Was galled by mine upbraidings, and replied :—

“ Thou wert not with us, but wert absent far

“ When need required thy presence. For these
arms—

“ Since to such height thy vain resentment boils,

“ Ne’er, graced with them, shalt thou to Scyros
sail.”

Thus hearing, and with shameless taunts reviled,

I sail to Scyros—of mine own bereft

By base Ulysses, vilest of the vile ;

Though less with him than with the kings incensed.

⁴ Me miserum ! quanto cogor meminisse dolore
Temporis illius, quo Graium murus Achilles
Procubuit ! nec me lachrymæ, luctusve, timorve
Tardârunt, quin corpus humo sublime referrem.
His humeris, his inquam, humeris ego corpus Achilles
Et simul arma tuli.

Ovid. Metam. xiii. 280.

As on its ruler's will a city hangs,
 So the confederate host—those of mankind
 To honour lost, learn baseness from their lords.
 My tale is told. Whoe'er the Atridæ loathes,
 Dear may he be to Heaven as loved by me.

STROPHE.

Ch. O mountain-loving Rhea, ⁵ nurse of all,
 Mother of mightiest Jove,
 Who dwell'st by rich Pactolus' golden stream,
 There, holiest mother, there
 Thee suppliant I implored,
 When on my chief th' Atridæ wreaked
 This most injurious wrong;
 When they his sire's resplendent arms bestowed—

⁵ Παμβῶτι Γᾶ.

Γᾶια θεὰ, μήτηρ μακάρων θνητῶν τ' ἀνθρώπων

Πάντροφε, πανδώτειρα.

Orph. Hymn.

Thus Virg. *Æn.* vi. 495.—*Terræ omniparentis alumnum.*

Pactolus, a river of Lydia with golden sands.—So “auro turbidus Hermus.” Peculiar honours were paid to Rhea, or Cybele, the Goddess here addressed, in Lydia and Phrygia. There is a remarkable propriety in the appeal to Rhea, as tutelary Goddess of the country wherein they then were.

(Thou ever blessed, whose proud car is drawn
By slaughtering lions!)—when they gave
The noblest trophy to Laertes' son!

Phi. Possessed, it seems, of cause for just
offence,

To this lone isle, O strangers, have ye sailed;
And can with me concur, that all these crimes
From base Ulysses and th' Atridæ spring.

That man, I know, to all injurious words
All evil acts is prompt—by which he deems
To compass nought of justice in the end.

This wakes not my surprise;—my wonder is
The elder Ajax bore to see this wrong.

Neop. He, stranger, was no more. While Ajax
lived

I had not thus been plundered of my right.

Phi. What hast thou said?—Sleeps Ajax in the
tomb?

Neop. He sees no more the welcome light of life.

Phi. Ah me unhappy! But for Tydeus' son,
And the vile ⁶bargain to Laertes sold

⁶ We have already adverted to the supposition that Ulysses
was the son of Sisyphus—

By Sisyphus—these have not perished too?
They were at least unfit for longer life.

Neop. Not they, be well assured. They flourish
still

The first in honour mid the Argive host.

Phi. But what—does he, the aged and the
brave,

My much-loved friend—does Pylian Nestor live?
He doubtless had by prudent counsels curbed
Their guilty outrage.

Neop. Yes; he lives indeed,
But lives in sorrow, since ⁷Antilochus,
His sole surviving son, in combat fell.

The Sisyphian seed,
By fraud and theft asserts his father's breed.

Ov. Metam. xiii.

⁷ Antilochus was slain by Memnon, according to Homer.

On the Phrygian plain
Extended pale, by swarthy Memnon slain.

Odyss. iv.

The word *μόνος* does not signify that Antilochus was the only son of Nestor, since we read of Pisistratus in the Odyssey, but the only surviving son of the two who had accompanied him to Troy.

Phi. Ah me! how mournful thy report of two,
Of whom such tale I least desired to hear:
Ah! whither, whither must I look, since these
Have perished, and the vile Ulysses lives,
Who hath so well deserved their doom of death?

Neop. A skilful combatant is he—but fraud
Though skilful, Philoctetes, sometimes fails.

Phi. Come, by the Gods, inform me where was he,
Patroclus, thy brave father's dearest friend?

Neop. He too had fall'n. But I will tell thee all
In one brief word—War never sweeps away
The vile and worthless, but destroys the good.

Phi. I do assent, and will for proof inquire
Of a most worthless and detested wretch,
Crafty and shrewd of tongue—how fares he now?

Neop. Of other than Ulysses speak'st thou thus?

Phi. I mean not him—there was a babbling fool
Whom none could silence—⁸ named Thersites—he,
This worthy—know'st thou if he live and prosper?

Neop. I never saw him—but have heard he lives.

Phi. Aye; fit he should—for nothing vile is lost,
Such the Gods visit with peculiar care—

⁸ For a description of Thersites, see Pope's *Il.* ii. 265.

The wily and the traitorous they rejoice
To rescue from the tomb, but ever send
To that drear home the righteous and the good.
How shall I judge, or how extol the Gods,
Proved, by the actions I would praise, unjust?

Neop. Son of Ætæan Pœas—henceforth I,
Beholding from afar the Trojan towers
And the Atridæ, will of both beware.
Where o'er the better still the worse prevails,
And honour fades, and infamy is crowned,
Such men I never, never will revere.
Henceforth for me shall Scyros' rocky isle
Suffice—contented with my native home.
Now to my ship I go. Thou, son of Pœas,
Farewell, and be thou happier! May the Gods
Heal, as thy soul desires, this sad disease—
We now depart, and soon as Heaven bestows
A favouring breeze, will steer our homeward course.

Phi. And will ye go, my son?

Neop. Time calls us now
To watch beside the ship, not thus remote.

Phi. Now by a father's, by a mother's love,
My son! by all thy home contains most dear,
I come imploring—leave me not thus lone,
Forsaken in the woes thine eyes behold,

Which thou hast heard for ever I endure ;
 9 Increase thy freight by me. I know, alas,
 Such load is most unwelcome—most abhorred,
 Yet, yet, endure it. To the nobly-born
 Is baseness hateful—honour is their pride.
 Foul shame it were on thee to leave me thus—
 But, O my son, what glory wouldst thou gain,
 Should I, yet living, reach th' Ætæan realms.
 Yield—'tis not e'en the evil of a day.
 Assent—embark me—cast me where thou wilt—
 The hold, the prow, the stern—I reck not where—
 Where'er thy comrades I may least offend.
 Assent, my son ! By Jove, the suppliant's aid,
 O yield—thus prostrate at thy knees I fall
 Though most infirm and wretched. Leave me not
 On this lone strand, remote from human care ;—
 Oh ! save and bear me to thy friendly home,
 Or to Chalcodon's¹⁰ loved Eubœan towers—

⁹ Ἐν παρέργῳ θῷ με, — Πάρεργον, “ qui est præter susceptum
 “ opus ; ad susceptum opus additus.” Evidently an addition
 to thy freight. By some, however, interpreted, “ an over-
 “ plus of toil.”

¹⁰ Chalcodon, an ancient King of Eubœa. Vide Eurip.

Not long my passage thence to Æta's plains,
 The rocky heights of Trachis, and the flood
 Of clear Spercheius, where to my loved sire
 Thou mayst present me, if, indeed, the grave
 Have not withdrawn him from my gaze for ever.
 Ah! oft to him, by those who voyaged here,
 Have I despatched my warm and earnest prayer,
 That, hither sending, he would bear me home.
 Or he is dead, or of the charge I gave
 Full lightly have they recked—the common lot
 Of wretchedness—and homeward sped their course.
 Now since to thee my own sad messenger
 I come—O save me, pity my despair,
 Viewing what miseries man must ever dread,
 His doom, how sealed in darkness—prosperous now,
 Now adverse. When unclouded by dismay
 Thy skies are bright, expect a sad reverse;
 When man is blessed, let him well observe
 His life, lest, unawares, he sink to ruin.

ANTISTROPHE.

Ch. Have mercy, King! for his sad tale is told

Ion. II. iv. 464. Τὰ σταθμὰ are properly the anchorage for ships.

Of countless woes and keen—
 Such never, never, may my friends endure!
 But if, O King, thou hat'st
 The Brother-Chiefs severe,
 Their baseness would I now convert
 To this poor exile's gain;
 And since he long hath lingered joyless here,
 In my good galley would I bear him hence,
 To his loved home—by such a deed
 Evading too the 'vengeful wrath of Heaven.

Neop. Beware! lest thou this grace too promptly
 yield,
 And, when thou shar'st the evil of his pangs,
 Then with these words thy feelings ill accord.

¹ Θεῶν νέμεσιν. Νέμεσις, the just and righteous anger of the Gods.

Si genus humanum et mortalia temnitis arma,
 At sperate Deos memores fandi atque nefandi.

Virg. *Æn.* i. 508.

There was also the φθόρος τῶν θεῶν, the causeless or capricious anger of the Gods, a very striking instance of which occurs, line 776, τὸν φθόρον δὲ πρόσκυσον. Compare *Alcest*, 1154, Monk's edit. in which there is a lucid and interesting note on the subject.

Cho. Distrust me not—it cannot, shall not be
That thou should'st charge me with inconstant
soul.

Neop. I hold it most unseemly to appear
Less prompt than thou to grant this timely aid.
Sail we, if such thy purpose—let him come
With speed—our ship shall bear him—for repulsed
He shall not be. May Heaven but grant us hence
A prosperous voyage to the land we seek.

Phi. O day most welcome! dearest of mankind!
Loved mariners—how, how shall I requite
The mighty favour ye have promptly shown?—
Hence let us haste, my son, saluting first
² My dark and drear abode, that thou may'st learn
How scanty I have lived—how firmly borne!
Alas! I deem, on agonies like these
None, save myself, could even brook to gaze—
But stern necessity hath taught me patience.

Ch. Hist! let us learn what news—two men
approach,

² "Αοικον ἐσόικεσιν. Literally, my houseless abode. This is
a striking instance of the fervent and habitual piety of the
ancients. Philoctetes would not leave even this miserable
abode, till he had adored the tutelary Gods.

One from thy bark, and one in foreign garb
Attired—these question—enter then the cave.

Enter MERCHANT.

Mer. Son of Achilles—of this mariner,
Who, with two others, near thy ship kept guard,
I asked where I might find thee, since I chanced
To light upon thee thus—not by design,
But driv'n by fortune to the self-same strand.
Steering my bark, as master, light of freight,
From Ilion homeward to the vine-clad isle
³ Of Peparethus ;—when I learnt the crew,
Who now are sheltering in the road, were thine ;—
I could not sail in silence, till I told
Tidings which yet thou know'st not—and should'st
know.

³ Peparethus is a small island in the Ægean sea, formerly noted for producing abundance of olives and wine.

Nitidæque ferax Peparethus olivæ.

Ov. Met. vii. 470.

'Ου πολλῷ στόλῳ may possibly mean with no numerous fleet, viz. with a single ship.

Perchance thou'rt yet unconscious what imports
Thy welfare—what the counsels of the Greeks
To thee referring—counsels now no more,
But deeds, commenced in act, if not fulfilled.

Neop. Stranger, the service of thy generous zeal,
Unless I am most base, shall long be owned.
But now the purport of thy tidings tell,
What recent plot of Greece 'gainst me thou bearest.

Mer. Some have already sailed with naval force
Charged to pursue thee—Phoenix, hoar with age,
And Theseus' martial sons.

Neop. To bear me back
By violence or persuasion?

Mer. This I know not—
I came but to inform thee what I heard.

Neop. Doth Phoenix, then, and do his comrades
dare

This arduous deed to please the sons of Atreus?

Mer. Know, 'tis already done—there is no pause,
Nor lingering here.

Neop. Why did Ulysses then
Withhold his ready service—was he checked
By salutary fear?

Mer. He, with the son
Of Tydeus on like enterprize was bound,

When from the port I weighed.

Neop. For whom, save me,
Thus did Ulysses sail?

Mer. Aye, there was one—but first
Inform me who is this—and what thou say'st
Speak in low voice.

Neop. This man, O stranger, is
The noble Philoctetes.

Mer. Say no more,
But hoist thy sail, and speed thee from the land.

Phi. What doth he tell, my son? with words
obscure

⁴ Why seeks this mariner to betray my hopes?

Neop. I know not yet—but let him frankly speak
Alike to thee, and me, and these beside us.

Mer. Son of Achilles, that to thee I breathe
Forbidden words, relate not to the host,
From whom, for aid a lowly man may lend,
I bear an ample largess.

Neop. I abhor
The sons of Atreus—this man is my friend,
My dearest friend, in that he hates them too.

⁴ Literally, why does he buy and sell me in his words?

But since thou cam'st in friendship, of the tale
Which thou hast heard, I pray thee nought conceal.

Mer. Look to thine actions.

Neop. I long since have looked.

Mer. The blame be wholly thine.

Neop. It shall—but speak.

Mer. I will. The two bold chiefs, e'en as thou
hear'st,

The son of Tydeus and Ulysses sage,
Bound by an oath have sailed, to bring this man
A captive, by persuasion, or by force.
This all the Greeks in open day have heard
Ulysses vaunt—for greater trust was his
To win his purpose, than his comrade owned.

Neop. And for what cause, such lengthened
space elapsed,
Would the Atridæ now regard the wretch
Whom for long years to exile they consigned?
What need invades them now? What heavenly
might,

What righteous wrath avenging impious deeds?

Mer. I will recount the whole, since haply thou
Art uninformed—There was a certain Seer,
Of race illustrious, Priam's royal son,
And Helenus his name, whom he that hears

From every tongue deserved and keen reproach,
The base Ulysses, as he prowled alone
By night, took captive, and his prisoner brought
Before th' assembled Greeks, a noble prey,
Who then with other mysteries this revealed :
Ne'er should they raze the lofty citadel
Of Troy so long besieged, till they should lure,
By smooth persuasion from the rocky isle
Where now he dwells, this warrior here before thee.
When thus Ulysses heard the seer proclaim,
He promptly pledged his faith that he would seek
This man, and bring him to the Grecian host,
And, as he deemed, with unreluctant mind ;
If not, by violence.—Should he fail in this,
His head should pay the forfeit of his failure.
Thou hast heard all, my son ! I warn thee now
To speed thy flight, with all who share thy love.

Phi. Wretch that I am ! This villain, most
accursed,

Hath he then sworn to lure me back to Greece ?

⁵ As soon shall he persuade me, when no more,

⁵ Sisyphus, on the approach of death, charged his wife, Merope, one of the Atlantides, to leave his body unburied.

Like his false father, to return to earth.

Mer. Of this I nothing know, but to my ship
Depart. The Gods aright direct you both!

[*Exit* MERCHANT.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

Phi. Is it not galling that Laertes' son
Should hope by wily blandishments again
To lure me hence, and show me to the Greeks?
O never! Rather would I lend mine ear
To the fell viper, which hath maimed me thus.—
But all things he will say, and all things dare,
And now I know too surely he will come.
But let us hence—that soon the wide, wide sea
May foam 'twixt us and loathed Ulysses' bark.
Come—let us hence—for timely speed full oft,

Arriving in Pluto's kingdom, he requested and received permission to return, in order to punish this seeming impiety of his wife, on condition of revisiting hell without delay. No sooner, however, was he out of the infernal regions, than he violated his oath, but was afterwards brought back by Mars, and punished.

The toil accomplished, yields a glad repose.

Neop. Soon as the gale, fresh blowing towards
the prow,

‘Subsides, we’ll hence—the wind is adverse now.

Phi. The winds are ever fair to him who flies
From wretchedness.

Neop. Fear not—this breeze to them
Is adverse also.

Phi. No adverse winds
Deter the pirate from his purposed course,
On plunder bent, and fired by lawless prey.

Neop. Well, since thou wilt, we sail, when from
within
Thou hast provided all thy need demands,
Or wishes prompt.

Phi. One thing my need demands,
Though scant my store.

Neop. What canst thou need, beyond
Our bark to furnish?

Phi. I possess a herb
With which the deadly wound I oft assuage,

° The Scholiast here reads $\alpha\gamma\tilde{\eta}$ for $\alpha\nu\tilde{\eta}$. If this be the true reading, it must be quasi $\epsilon\alpha\gamma\tilde{\eta}$, from $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\nu}\mu\iota$, frango.

And mitigate the anguish.

Neop. Bring it then—

Would'st thou take aught beside?

Phi. I must beware,

Lest one of these dread arrows should escape,

For mortal hands to find.

Neop. Is this, which now

Thou bear'st, the far-famed bow?

Phi. Yes; aught besides

Were stranger to this hand.

Neop. And may I dare

To bring it closer to my lips—to hold—

And ⁷kiss the sacred relic as divine?

Phi. To thee, my son, both this, and aught beside
Of mine that may delight thee, shall be done.

Neop. Such is indeed my wish, though but
indulged

⁷ Προσκύσαι. This word here signifies to kiss, though in v. 766, (Erfurdt,) it denotes to appease or mitigate by adoration, the anger of the Gods. Among the ancients, (as well as the modern Orientals,) a kiss was considered the greatest mark of veneration and respect.

Et dare sacratis oscula liminibus.

Tib. Eleg. i. v. 44.

Compare also *Cic. in Ver. Lib. iv. 43.* *Virg. Æn. ii. 490.*

With this control—if it be just—I wish ;
If not, pass thou my wish unheeded by.

Phi. Thy words are pious, son!—'tis just for thee—
Thee, who alone hast giv'n me to behold
The sun's broad light, my own Ætean land,
My aged father, and my much-loved friends ;
And bidst me rise triumphant o'er my foes.
Doubt not—'tis freely thine to touch the bow ;
And when thou hast restored it, boast that thou
Alone of men hast grasped the sacred arms,
The guerdon of thy virtue. I myself
By constant friendship won th' immortal gift—
It will not grieve me then that thou, my friend,
Should'st view and bear it. He who knows to pay
A due return for benefits received
Is a true friend, the dearest earthly good.

Neop. Now should'st thou go within.

Phi. Aye—and within
Will lead thee too, for this my sad disease
Longs to receive thee as its firm support.

[*Exeunt* NEOPTOLEMUS and PHILOCTETES.]

Chorus.

STROPHE I.

Yes ! I have heard in tale, yet ne'er have seen,
 What hopeless anguish he was doomed to feel,
 Who sought the couch of Jove's Imperial Queen,
 Chained by the Thunderer on the^s whirling wheel;—
 But none have known, none viewed, of all man-
 kind,

Like this sad exile, to despair consigned,
 Who, though for guilt, for fraud unblamed,
 For justice 'mid the righteous famed,
 In shame and sorrow thus hath pined !
 Ah ! much I marvel how he bore
 To list the wild waves' sullen roar ;
 The only sound of life—yet still
 Lived on to keener pangs and deadlier ill :—

ANTISTROPHE I.

Sole tenant of the shore—scarce faltering on

^s "Αμπυκα. . Originally, the fillet used by women to bind up their hair ; and hence taken, from its round form, to signify a wheel. Musgrave proposes, however, to read ἄρτυγα.

With powerless step—no human succour near;
⁹No partner of his woe to heed the groan
 Wrung from his bosom by that pang severe;
 None, when his wound poured forth th' envenomed
 flood

To stanch with soothing herbs the feverish blood,
 Herbs culled from earth's maternal breast,
 Potent to win a transient rest!—
 For when to sleep awhile subdued
 His pangs relax—as, yet untried
 To wander from its mother's side,
 Alone the infant seeks to stray;—
 He crawls with faltering foot his weary way.

STROPHE II.

No fruits for him provides the sacred soil,
 No golden grain requites his patient toil,
 He can but aim the winged shafts on high
 From that far-sounding bow,
 And for his hunger win a scant supply.

⁹ Κακογείτων. Not a bad neighbour, but a neighbour to evil. It must, however, be confessed, that the word does occasionally bear the former sense. Κακογείτονες ἔχθροι.—*Callim.*

Ah joyless soul! ten lingering years succeed,
 And still, uncheered by wine's enlivening glow,
 He seeks the stagnant waters, sad and slow,
 Where chance his path may lead!

ANTISTROPHE II.

Again for him shall joy resplendent shine,
 From woe to greatness raised—of royal line
 A youth encountering now, who o'er the flood,
 In galley swift of flight,—
 The long, long months fulfilled—to his abode
 Shall bear the exile, where the Melian choir
 Dwell by Spercheius—where from Æta's height
 The brazen shielded chief to realms of light
¹⁰Rose in celestial fire.

Neop. Crawl forth, if such thy pleasure.—Where-
 fore thus

Silent without a cause, and sudden struck
 As if with mute amazement?

Phi. Woe is me!

Neop. What ails thee?

Phi. 'Tis a trifle. Come, my son!

¹⁰ The apotheosis of Hercules, which took place on Mount Æta, is here adverted to.

Neop. Arise fresh sufferings from thy present plague?

Phi. No, no, in sooth; I tread more lightly now—

Alas! ye Gods!

Neop. Why thus with bitter groans
Invoke the Gods?

Phi. That they be present now,
Our guardians and preservers. Ha! that pang—

Neop. What anguish wrings thee—wilt thou not
confess?—
Still silent? Some fresh ill, it seems, hath seized
thee!

Phi. I die, my son! no longer can I quell
This maddening pain. Ha! there! again it thrills,
Thrills to my inmost soul. Wretch that I am!
My son, my son, I perish, I am racked—

(Repeated and violent groans.)

Hast thou a sword, my son? For Heaven's dear
sake,
With friendly hand strike off this wretched foot;
Quick—smite it off—and spare not life itself.

¹ Erfurdt reads this passage *μὴ φείσῃ βίας*, Spare not force.
The reading we have adopted appears preferable, as it is a

Neop. What strange and sudden pang hath seized thee now,
That thus thou utterest wild and bitter cries?

Phi. Know'st thou, my son?—

Neop. What is it?

Phi. Know'st thou, son?—

Neop. Know what?

Phi. Dost thou not know? how know'st thou not?—

² Woe! woe is me!

Neop. The burden of thy pangs
Is heavy on thee now!

more appropriate conclusion to the impassioned ravings of the unhappy sufferer.

² “ Unless all the commentators be mistaken,” says the Oxford Prose Translator, “ these expressions, and the *ελελελέλε* of Æschylus, are positive nonsense.” We should rather be inclined to suppose that *all* the commentators were mistaken, than that either Sophocles or Æschylus could write positive nonsense. When we consider the copiousness of the Greek language, we surely need not wonder that it cannot be adequately rendered by the paucity of our own. Had our *barbarian* Shakspeare written in Greek, he would, doubtless, have surpassed Æschylus and Sophocles as far as he excels every modern dramatic poet, though even in this case it would not be a necessary consequence that he should altogether have discarded interjections.

Phi. Heavy indeed !

No words can paint it—yet—O pity me !

Neop. What can I do to aid thee ?

Phi. Do not thou

In wild amaze betray me to my foes.

The pangs revive by starts—perchance, ere long,

They will have run their course, and cease. Ah me !

Neop. Unhappy man ! thine anguish wakes my

pity—

Proved most unhappy in thy countless ills.

Shall I uphold thee with sustaining hand ?

Phi. No, no ; not thus—but take these hallow-

ed arms,

As thou didst seek to hold them, till the pangs

That rend me now, exhausted, shall subside ;

Take thou, and guard them well. Slumber is wont

To seize and soothe me when the pangs are o'er ;

Nor can I rest till then—but I must lie

In undisturbed repose. And if, meantime,

My foes approach, I charge thee by the Gods,

Nor by assent, nor force, nor any means,

To yield these arms to them, lest thou consign

Both me, thy suppliant, and thyself to death.

Neop. Be calm, and trust my caution—to no hand,

Save to mine own and thine, shall they be given.

Yield them with favouring omens to my care.

Phi. Receive them, O my son. But pay thy
vows

To Envy, lest they prove the source of woe,
As they have been to me and were to him
Their first and great possessor.

Neop. Grant, ye Gods!
Such may my fortune be—and may our course
Be swift and prosperous, where disposing Heaven
Wills in its justice, and my bark is bound.

Phi. O but, I fear, thy prayers are breathed in
vain.

Alas, my son!

Once more th' ensanguined stream from this deep
wound

Is oozing fresh, and keener pangs impend.

Ah me! Ah me!

Why, cursed foot, why dost thou thus torment me?

Ah! it steals on—

It comes—it comes—'tis here—Wretch that I am!

Thou seest my sad estate. Ah! fly me not!

O that like pangs might rend thy guilty breast,

Stranger of Cephallene.—Ah! I groan

Again—and yet again.—O brother chiefs

O Agamemnon, Menelaus, that ye

Could feel the anguish I have felt so long !
 Death—death—so oft, so long invoked in vain,
 Day after day, wilt thou not come at last?
 My son, my noble son, afford thine aid.
 Ah burn me, burn me, in the flames that ³ curl
 Around us, generous youth!—Such task as I
 For these good arms, which now thou keep'st, dis-
 charged
 To Jove's great son, do thou the same for me.
 What say'st thou, son?
 What say'st thou? wherefore mute? alas, where art
 thou?

Neop. I mourn in pity to behold thy woes.

Phi. Ah! be not thou dejected—with such pangs
 The fit comes on, and is as quickly past.
 But, I conjure thee, leave me not alone.

Neop. Cheer thee! we will remain.

Phi. And wilt thou stay?

Neop. Account it certain.

Phi. By an oath to bind thee,

³ We do not read here ἀνακαλεμένω, as in Erfurdt's edition, but, according to Brunck, ἀνακυκλεμένω. The isle of Lemnos appears to have emitted volcanic fires, which is probably the reason why it was consecrated to Vulcan.

I should disdain, my son!

Neop. Justice, at least,
Would now forbid me to depart without thee.

Phi. Pledge me thy hand.

Neop. I do, I will remain.

Phi. Now thither—thither—

Neop. Whither dost thou mean.

Phi. Upwards—

Neop. Thou rav'st again—why dost thou gaze
Thus wildly on the azure vault of heaven?

Phi. Release, release me!

Neop. Whither thus release thee—

Phi. Release me now.

Neop. I will not yet release thee.

Phi. Thou wilt destroy me, if thou touch me
still.

Neop. Lo, now I leave thee to thyself, and what
Is yet thy purpose?

Phi. Take, O take me, Earth,
Expiring to thy bosom, for this plague
Will leave me strength to stand upright no more.

Neop. Sleep, it should seem, ere long will soothe
his woes.

His powerless head already droops to earth;
And his whole frame a copious sweat bedews.

Lo! in his foot one black and ruptured vein
 Emits the gore. Now leave we him, O friends,
 That sleep may soothe him in a bland repose!

STROPHE.

Ch. ⁴Sleep, gentle sleep, in pain, in griefs un-
 taught,

Come with thy softest gales,—
 O peace-imparting Power!
 Veil from his eyes the 'broad red glare of day;
 Come, healing God, O come!—
 Look well, my son, or where thou pause,
 Or whither move—and when occasion asks
 My willing aid! The gales invite,
 And why delay the deed?
 To seize aright th' important hour
 Avails to prompt success

⁴ This passage, beautiful as it is, is excelled by those exquisite lines of Euripides:

ὦ φίλον ὕπνε θέλγητρον, ἐπίκερον νόσῳ

ὦς ἡδὺ μοι προσῆλθες ἐν δέοντί γε.

ὦ πότνια λήθη τῶν κακῶν, ὥς εἴ, σοφὴ,

καὶ τοῖσι δυστυχῆσιν εὐκταία θεός.

Eurip. Orest. 205. (Porson's edit.)

⁵ Some, including Erfurdt, read here ἀχλὺν for αἰγλαν, which would altogether invert the sense of the passage—
 “Stretch over his eyes the mist of darkness.”

Beyond sage counsel, or superior might.

Neop. Nay, nought he hears. I know, if he remain,

In vain we seize his arms and sail to Troy;
To him this crown belongs—we bear him hence
By Heaven's command—and ⁶'tis a base reproach
To vaunt with falsehood promise unredeemed.

ANTISTROPHE.

Ch. For this, my son, for this let Heaven provide—

But when again thou speak'st,
In low and whispered tone
Reply, my son! the slumber of disease
Is light and watchful still,—
But thou, far as thou may'st, explore
For me the purpose which is labouring now
Deep in thy breast concealed. Thou know'st
The man of whom I speak;
And, if thy thought with his accord,
'Tis wisdom's part to trace
The depth of counsels that perplex the simple.

⁶ Some understand these words as referring to Ulysses, others, to Philoctetes. Brunck, whom we have followed, inclines to the former opinion.

The gale, the gale is ours—in slumber, still
 As midnight rest, he lies. Be sleep, of fear
⁷Devoid, our aid, enchaining hand, foot, heart.
 He looks as of the dead. Thy bidding speak—
⁸This task, O son, my prudence can perform;
 Toil most avails, when most of fear devoid.

Neop. Peace—peace—I charge thee, from such
 thoughts refrain;
 For lo,—his eyelids move—he lifts his head.

Phi. O light to sleep succeeding! faithful care
 Of these kind strangers far beyond my hope!
 I never deemed, my son, that thou wouldst bear
 With constant pity mine unrivalled ills,
 And still thy presence and thine aid bestow.
 Such toil those noble and right worthy chiefs,
 Th' Atridæ, never had thus lightly brooked;
 But thou, a gallant father's generous son,
 Dear youth! with stedfast soul hast promptly borne
 My groans—and fetid odours of my wound.

⁷ We concur with Reiske and Musgrave in reading ἀδὲς
 for ἀλεῆς.

⁸ This is a very perplexed passage: it appears to convey a
 hint of the ease with which Philoctetes might be seized when
 asleep. The obscurity is evidently designed.

Now, since this genial sleep has kindly lent
Brief respite from my sufferings, O my son,
Raise me from earth, and fix me on the ground,
That, when the anguish ceases, we may go
To our good ship—nor yet delay our course.

Neop. Much I rejoice to see, beyond my hopes,
Thine eye to light, thy frame from pain restored.
Thy pangs regarding, and that death-like rest,
I deemed, in sooth, thy latest hour was nigh.
Raise now thyself—or, if it please thee more,
These will support thee, nor refuse the toil,
So thou assent, and I command their service.

Phi. I thank thee, son, and raise me as thou
say'st—
But leave thy crew, lest, ere our need demands,
The fetid odours reach them;—'tis enough
To bear such loathsome comrade in their bark.

Neop. This as thou wilt, but rise, and lean on me.

Phi. Courage! I will, as is my wont, arise.

Neop. Ye Gods! I waver—what should next be
done?

Phi. My son, what mean'st thou? whither tends
thy speech?

Neop. I know not whither I should turn my words,
Perplexed and dubious!

Phi. Dost thou speak of doubt?

Nay, talk not thus, my son.

Neop. Yet even now

In such am I involved!

Phi. Hath then the ill

Of my disease impelled thee to withhold

The passage promised late?

Neop. All must be ill

When man the bias of his soul forsakes,

And does a deed unseemly.

Phi. But I know

Nought of thy sire unworthy wilt thou do

In granting aid to one not wholly worthless.

Neop. I shall appear a villain—hence my grief.

Phi. 'Tis not thy deeds, thy words excite my
terror.

Neop. Great Jove direct me! Shall I twice be
proved

A villain, first concealing sacred truth—

Then uttering words of falsehood?

Phi. Or my fears

Deceive me, or this man designs to sail

And leave me here, abandoned and betrayed.

Neop. I will not leave thee—'tis my liveliest fear

Lest to thy sorrow I should bear thee hence.

Phi. What dost thou mean, my son? Thy words perplex me.

Neop. Nought will I hide. Thou must away to Troy,

To the Atridæ and the host of Greece.

Phi. Ah me! what say'st thou?

Neop. Till thou hear'st, be calm.

Phi. What must I hear; what is thy purpose now?

Neop. First from thine ills to rescue thee—then sail

To raze with thee the haughty towers of Troy.

Phi. Is this indeed thy sure and settled aim?

Neop. Necessity constrains me to the deed.

Hear then in calmness, and thy wrath restrain.

Phi. Ah! I am lost—betrayed. What hast thou done?

O stranger—quickly give me back my arms.

Neop. It cannot be. Justice and interest both constrain obedience to superior power.

Phi. ⁹Thou blasting flame! Thou horror of my soul!

⁹ The Scholiast, with his usual felicity of conjecture, interprets this as an execrable pun on the name of Pyrrhus, in which he has been followed by Brumoy, who paraphrases it,

Thou loathed inventor of atrocious fraud ;
 What hast thou done—how wronged my easy
 faith ?
 Doth it not shame thee to behold me thus,
 A suitor and a suppliant, wretch, to thee ?
 Stealing my bow, of life thou hast bereft me.
 Restore, I pray thee, O my son, restore it !
 By thine ancestral Gods, take not my life !
 Wretch that I am ! he deigns not e'en reply,
 But still looks backward, as resolved to spurn me.
¹⁰ Ye ports, ye beetling crags, ye haunts obscure
 Of mountain-beasts, ye wild and broken rocks,
 To you I mourn, for I have none beside !
 To you, who oft have heard me, tell the wrongs,
 The cruel deeds Achilles' son hath wrought !
 Pledged to convey me home, he sails to Troy—
 Plighting his hand in faith—he meanly steals
 My bow, the sacred arms of Jove's great son ;

“ O rage digne de ton nom.” Both the Scholiast and his imitator appear to have forgotten, that the son of Achilles was known only to Philoctetes by the name of Neoptolemus.

¹⁰ Daphni, tuum Pœnos etiam ingemuisse leones,
 Interitum, montesque feri sylvæque loquuntur.

Virg. Ec. v. 27.

And would display them to the Grecian host.
 By force he takes me, as some vigorous chief,
 Nor knows his triumph is achieved o'er one
 Long helpless as the dead—a shadowy cloud—
 An empty phantom. In my hour of might
 He ne'er had seized me thus, since, in my ills,
 He but by fraud entrapped me. I am now
 Deceived to my despair. What shall I do?
 Ah! yet restore them, be again thyself.
 What dost thou say?—Yet silent?—Then I perish.
 Thou double portal of the rock, again,
 I enter thee, of arms, of life, deprived;—
 But I must pine forsaken in the cave;
 Nor winged bird, nor mountain-ranging beast,
 Shall these good darts bring down. I yield in
 death

To those a banquet, who supplied mine own;
 They whom I once pursued shall hunt me now;
 While with my blood their slaughter I atone,
 Betrayed by one who seemed the soul of honour.
 I will not curse thee, ere I learn, if yet
 Thou wilt relent—if not, all evil blast thee!

Ch. What do we, King! we wait but thy com-
 mand,
 To sail—or yield to this poor exile's prayer?

Neop. On me, indeed,—compassion strongly fell
Long since, when first his piteous tale I heard.

Phi. Have mercy on me, by the Gods, my son!
Shame not thyself in thus beguiling me.

Neop. What shall I do?—Oh had I never left
My native Scyros! this unworthy deed
Is hateful to me.

Phi. No; thou art not base,
Though lessons of dishonour hast thou learnt
From evil men. To others leaving now
Such arts, sail hence, restoring first mine arms.

Neop. What, comrades, shall we do?

[*Extending the Bow to PHILOCTETES.*

ULYSSES *rushes on the Stage.*

ULYSSES, PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

Ulys. What wouldst thou do,
O vilest of mankind? Wilt thou not hence,
The sacred arms resigning to my hand?

Phi. Ha! who is this?—Ulysses do I hear?

Ulys. Aye! I, who stand before thee, am Ulysses.

Phi. O! I am sold, undone. This is the wretch
Who snared, and hath despoiled me of mine arms.

Ulys. 'Tis I, in sooth—none else. I own the deed.

Phi. Restore, resign the arms to me, my son.

Ulys. This, did he wish, he would not dare to grant.

But thou must hence with us, or these around
By force shall drag thee.

Phi. Villain! of the vile
At once the vilest, and most daring too,
Shall these by force constrain me?

Ulys. Aye! unless
Thou go spontaneous.

Phi. O thou Lemnian land!
Thou all-controlling flame, by Vulcan framed,
Can wrong like this be borne, and shall he dare
To force me from thy shelter?

Ulys. It is Jove,
Yes, Jove, supreme controller of the land,
Jove thus hath willed—and I but do his will.

Phi. Detested wretch! what falsehoods dost
thou frame!

The Gods alleging—thou dost tax the Gods
With lies, to gloss thine own dissembling guile.

Ulys. No; they are ever true. Yet, in this way,
Thou must proceed.

Phi. I will not.

Ulys. But thou shalt—

Thou must obey.

Phi. Ah! what a doom is mine!

Did then my sire beget me as a slave,

And not the heir of freedom?

Ulys. Nay, not thus;

But mated with the noblest;—leagued with whom

Thou must take Troy, and raze her towers to earth.

Phi. O never! were I doomed to every woe,

While yet for me this lofty shore stands firm.

Ulys. What wilt thou do then?

Phi. I will cast me down

From rock on rock, and bathe my brow in blood.

Ulys. Ho—seize him—lest he execute his threat.

Phi. What do ye suffer, O my hands! deprived

Of your loved bow—by this base wretch ensnared.

O thou, whose wisdom claims no kindred tie

With honour and with freedom, with what wiles

Hast thou beguiled me, with what arts deceived!

Making this youth thy tool—unknown to me—

Unworthy to partake thine infamy—

Of my regard more worthy, who but knew,

Without a thought, to work thy base command.

Remorse, I see, corrodes his bosom now

Have they thrust forth to exile, as thou say'st,
 Charging on them the crime they charge on thee.
 And now why seek me? Wherefore drag me hence?
 I, who am nothing, dead long since to you!
 How, O thou wretch, most hateful to the Gods!
 Am I not lame, my wound offensive still?
 How can ye serve the Gods in prayer?—how slay
 The votive victims, if I share your bark?
 How pour libations due? Such was the plea
 On which ye first expelled me. Curses on ye!
 Ye, who have wronged me thus, yourselves shall
 meet
 An equal doom, if Heaven cares aught for justice.
 I know, I know it does, for never else
 Would ye have voyaged for a wretch like me,
 Had not a goad from Heaven itself constrained you.
³ But, O my father-land, all-seeing Gods!
 Avenge, avenge me in your own good time
 On all my foes, if ye, indeed, have aught
 Of pity for a wretch, who pines in ills,

³ Wakefield reads here, Ω πυρωτὶ γῇ—conjecturing that Philoctetes meant to apostrophize the land of Lemnos. The conjecture, like most of the same editor, is ingenious but fanciful.

Worthiest of pity. Could I see them fall,
I think my pangs would never wake again !

Ch. Stern is the stranger, and his words are stern,
Ulysses, and he will not bend to ills.

Ulys. Much to his passionate speech could I reply
If time were meet ;—one word must now suffice.
When Greece needs men like this, such then am I—
When just and pious men th' emergence asks,
None wilt thou find more pious than myself.
'Tis still my wish to triumph over all
Excepting thee—to thee I promptly yield.

[*To the CHORUS.*

Release your charge, nor hold him longer thus :
Let him remain. We have no need of thee,

[*To PHILOCTETES.*

So but thine arms are ours,—since in the camp
Teucer is present, practised in this art ;—
I, too, am no less skilful than thyself
To bend the bow, and aim th' unerring shaft.
What ask we then of thee ? Back to thy cave,
And pace with sullen tread the Lemnian isle ;
Let us away—perchance this prize for me
May win the fame to thee by Heaven assigned.

Phi. Ah me ! what can I do ? And shalt thou
shine

Glorious 'mid Greece, with these mine arms adorned?

Ulys. Answer me not, for I am now departing.

Phi. Son of Achilles, shall thy voice no more
Address me—but wilt thou, too, leave me thus?

Ulys. Retire, nor heed him, generous as thou
art,

Lest woman-pity mar our better fortune.

Phi. Will ye, too, strangers, leave me thus for-
lorn,

A wretch abandoned, nor have pity on me?

Ch. This youth is our commander—what to thee
He shall reply, the same we answer too.

Neop. Ulysses will reproach me, as too prone
To weak compassion—yet, if such his will
Remain, till in the ship our mariners

Are ready, and our vows to Heaven are made.

Meantime his purpose, haply, he may change

More to our profit;—haste we now away;

Ye, when we call, with speed obey the summons.

STROPHE I.

Phi. O dwelling of the caverned rock,
By changing seasons cheered, or cooled,
How am I then, unhappy! doomed
Never to quit thy drear abode;

But thou wilt be my shelter ev'n in death.
 Woe, woe is me!
 O cheerless cave, replete
 With all that wrings the joyless breast,
 Whence shall my daily food
 Be won, and to my need
 Who shall extend relief;—what cheering hope?
 * O would the direful brood
 Of Harpies, flapping hoarse their sounding wings,
 Waft me aloft, for I can bear no more!

STROPHE II.

Ch. Thou, thou alone, unhappy! on thine head
 Hast drawn these woes—no other hand
 On thee hath wreaked this doom—
 When wisdom called thee to decide,
 Thy free election chose the heavier ill.

* There is much diversity of opinion respecting the true reading of this passage. Aldus has *πτωκάδες*; Gedicke, *πλωτάδες*. Several other conjectures are made by the Scholiast. Vossius, however, considers *πτῶαδες* (from the obsolete word *πτῶειν*, *cadere*) the preferable reading, which, Erfurdt says, he embraces for want of a better. The allusion is probably to the Harpies.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Phi. I then, a wretch, a hopeless wretch,
 Wasted by ever-gnawing pangs,
 From henceforth in extremest woe,
 Torn from the converse of mankind,
 Here must abide and perish—Ah what doom
 Of misery—
 No more with food supplied,
 With winged shaft and vigorous hand
 Seizing the prey no more :
 But unsuspected fraud
 And wily words my cooler sense beguiled.
 Ah ! could I see the wretch,
 Who planned the guileful scheme, like me con-
 signed,
 Through equal years to equal agony !

ANTISTROPHE II.

Ch. The doom, the doom of Heaven—no trea-
 cherous scheme
 Framed by my hand hath wrought thee this !
 Turn then, on others turn
 Thy bitter curse of agony ;
 E'en this I seek, that thou my kindness spurn not.

STROPHE III.

Phi. Ah me! Now seated on the shore
Of the white-foaming main,
He mocks me, poisoning in his hand
The solace of my woes,
Which none of mortals, save myself, hath borne.
My bow, my only friend,
And wrested from a friendly hand,
How wouldst thou look, if sight and sense were thine,
In pity on the friend
Of Hercules—thus plunged
In heaviest ills, who ne'er shall bend thee more!
Henceforth—how sad the change!
Wilt thou obey a man of many wiles;
Attesting impious fraud,
Beholding one abandoned and accursed,
Who plots unnumbered crimes—all woes
Which on my head hath base Ulysses heaped!

STROPHE IV.

Ch. To speak the truth with frankness is the
part
Of manly bosoms—not to vent
In vehement speech invidious wrath.

Our King, from all the chiefs
Of Greece preferred, by *his* good counsels led,
Hath done a public service to the state.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Phi. Ye winged tribes, ye tameless herds
Who ever range the hills
Of this inhospitable isle ;
Come from your coverts now
Undaunted—I no longer wield
The bow, so feared before,
To feeble wretchedness consigned.
Henceforth the spot is left unguarded all,
And ye have nought to dread.
Come—'tis the moment now,
Blood to avenge with blood, and on my flesh
Your angry vengeance sate,
For I am quickly sinking to my doom !
What can supply my wants,
Who on the empty air alone must feed,
Bereft of all the genial food,
Earth, nurse of man, produces for her sons ?

ANTISTROPHE IV.

Ch. If thou regard the man who comes, to thee

Benevolent, his cares requite.
 For know, know well, for thee
 Escape is open still.
 Hard is thy fate to 'bear,' and yet
 Unschooled to meet the wills its doom involves.

Phi. Again, again thou wak'st mine ancient woes
 To new remembrance keen;
 The worthiest thou of all who e'er have trod
 Our isle, why wound me thus—what hast thou done?

Ch. Why say'st thou this?

Phi. If thou indulge a hope
 To bear me yet to Troy's detested land.

Ch. Such to my thought the wisest scheme ap-
 pears.

Phi. Then, then this moment leave me to my doom.

Ch. Welcome, most welcome, is thy bidding
 now,

And cheerful I obey.—

Away—away!

Seek we the ship, obedient to our chief.

Phi. 'Go not, I pray, by Jove who hears the
 curse!

⁵ *Ἀπαῖς Διὸς.*—"Jove who is called to witness by suppliants."

Ch. Be calmer then.

Phi. Ah! strangers, tarry by the Gods!

Ch. What means
This sudden cry?

Phi. Ah miserable me!
Fate! unrelenting fate! I am undone—
A very wretch accurst!
My foot, my foot, how can I yet endure thee?
How can I yet live on?
Return, O strangers, yet awhile return.

Ch. What does thy purpose vary now
From all thy recent speech expressed?

Phi. Shall one be blamed, who, maddening in
his pain,
Utters delirious and distracted words?

Ch. Go then, as we exhort thee, wretched man!

Phi. O never, never!—Fixed is my resolve,
Though the dread Lord of lightning blast me here
With the red flashing of his fiery bolts.
Let Ilion perish, with each hated chief,
Who, unrelenting, spurned this deadly wound.
But ye, O strangers, grant but one brief prayer!

Ch. What is thy will?

Phi. A sword, or sharpened axe,
Or deadlier weapon, to my need convey.

Ch. What can a gift like this achieve for thee?

Phi. To lop with mine own hand this head—
these limbs—

My soul is bent on death.

Ch. Why thus?

Phi. To seek my much-loved sire—

Ch. Whither on earth?

Phi. Nay; in the dreary grave,
For light and life are his no more.

My country! O my country, most beloved!

How, thus abandoned, should I look on thee,
I, who have left thy sacred streams

To aid the legions of detested Greece,
And thus am nothing now!

Ch. Nay; now indeed long since beside my
ship

Had I been walking, save that I descried
Ulysses coming with Achilles' son.

Swift they approach, and now before us stand.

Enter NEOPTOLEMUS *and* ULYSSES.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

Ulys. Wilt thou not tell me, wherefore on this way

Thou steal'st thus earnest to retrace thy path?

Neop. To make atonement for my former errors.

Ulys. Thy words amaze me—Wherein hast thou
erred?

Neop. Wherein by thee and all th' united host
Persuaded—

Ulys. What then, that becomes thee not,
Hast thou accomplished?

Neop. With ungenerous guile
And fraudulent arts a noble soul betrayed.

Ulys. Whom—whom? Ah me! What new design
impels thee?

Neop. Nought new indeed—but to the son of
Pœas—

Ulys. What wilt thou do?—How fear is stealing
on me.

Neop. From whom I took these arms, to him
once more—

Ulys. O Jove! what say'st thou? Mean'st thou
to restore them?

Neop. Yes; for I won and keep them still by
baseness.

Ulys. Nay, by the Gods! in mockery speak'st
thou thus?

Neop. Aye—if to speak the truth be mockery!

Ulys. What, son of great Achilles, dost thou
say?

What hast thou uttered?

Neop. Will it pleasure thee
That twice and thrice I should repeat my words?

Ulys. 'Twas sore against my will to hear them
once.

Neop. Be now assured, for thou hast heard the
whole.

Ulys. There is, there is, who will prevent the
deed.

Neop. Ha—who shall dare to hinder me in this?

Ulys. Th' assembled host of Greece—among
them I.

Neop. Wise though thou art, thy words betray
no wisdom.

Ulys. Neither thy words nor actions speak thee
wise.

Neop. If both are just, 'tis better far than wis-
dom.

Ulys. How is it just the trophies to restore,
By my sage counsels gained?

Neop. I grossly erred,
And would retrieve mine error.

Ulys. Fear'st thou not,

For such an act, th' avenging host of Greece?

Neop. ⁶ In a just cause thy terrors I despise,
Nor shall thy hand direct me at thy will.

Ulys. Henceforth with Troy we war not, but
with thee.

Neop. Well—be it so.

Ulys. Seest thou my right hand laid
On my sword's hilt?

Neop. And dost not thou see mine
In the same act; nor shall it linger there?

Ulys. I will forbear—but when the tale I tell
To our whole army, they will best chastise thee.

Neop. Thy prudence I commend—act ever thus,
And cause of sorrow rarely will be thine.—

Come forth, thou son of Pœas, Philoctetes,
Quitting once more thy rocky dwelling place.

Phi. Ah! what new clamour through my cave
resounds?

⁶ There is no terror, Cassius, in thy threats,
For I am armed so strong in honesty,
That they pass by me as the idle wind,
Which I regard not.

Jul. Cæsar, Act iv. Sc. 3,

Why am I called? What, strangers, is your will?
Alas! some foul device! And are ye come
To heap fresh sorrows on my former woes?

Neop. Courage—and hear the words I bring thee
now.

Phi. I hear in terror.—By thy words betrayed,
To woe already have those words consigned me!

Neop. Is there no place for true repentance
still?

Phi. Such were thy words, so winning, when
mine arms

Thou stolest, frank in aspect, false in heart.

Neop. Such are not now—I wish thee but to
hear me.

Still art thou firmly fixed to linger here,
Or wilt thou share our voyage?

Phi. Hush! no more—

If thou speak thus, thy words are bootless all.

Neop. Art thou decided?

Phi. Aye, far more resolved
Than words can tell thee!

Neop. Much could I have wished
My words might yet persuade thee; but if speech
Can nought avail my purpose, I am mute.

Phi. ⁷ Thy words are vain indeed. Thy fraudulent soul

Shall never win my friendly thought again ;

Thou, who by craft of life itself dost rob me,

And then with idle exhortations com'st,

Thou basest son of a most noble sire !

Perdition seize ye all—th' Atridæ first,

Ulysses next, then thee !

Neop. Forbear thy curse,

And from my hand again thine arms receive.

Phi. What say'st thou ! Shall we then be twice deceived ?

Neop. Nay—⁸ by the awe of holy Jove I swear !

⁷ Came he right now to sing a raven's note,
Whose dismal tone bereft my vital powers,
And thinks he that the chirping of a wren,
By crying comfort from a hollow breast,
Can chase away the first conceived sound ?
Hide not thy poison with such sugared words.

Sec. Part Hen. VI. Act iii. Sc. 2.

⁸ A most solemn and inviolable form of adjuration. So—
Ω θεῶν ἄγνὸν σέβας.—Æd. Tyr. 830.

Ἄλλ' εἰ μὲν ἄγνὸν ἐστὶ σοι

Πείθεις σέβας.

Æsch. Eum. 888.

Phi. O words most welcome, if sincerely breathed.

Neop. Actions shall prove their truth. Stretch
forth thine hand,
And once again be master of thine arms.

[*Gives him the bow, &c.*

ULYSSES rushes in.

Ulys. That I forbid it, let the Gods attest,
Both for the Atridæ, and th' united host!

Phi. Whose voice is this, my son? And do I hear,
Indeed, Ulysses?

Ulys. Know thou one is nigh,
Who yet will drag thee to the plains of Troy,
Whether Achilles' son consent, or not.

Phi. Not unavenged, if well this dart be aimed.

Neop. ⁹ No—aim it not! O, by the Gods, forbear.

Phi. Nay—by the Gods, my son, release my hand.

Neop. I will not loose thee.

Phi. Why prevent me thus
From wreaking vengeance on a foe abhorred?

⁹ The readers of *Telemachus* will, doubtless, remember in how much more favourable a light the character of Ulysses is represented by Fenelon.

Neop. Such deed were worthy nor of thee, nor
me.

Phi. Know this, at least, these leaders of the
Greeks
Are boastful liars, dastards in the fight,
Though trebly valiant in insulting words.

Neop. Well—thou hast now thine arms; nor is
there aught

Of wrath or censure thou canst vent on me.

Phi. None, none—well hast thou proved the
generous stock

Of which thou cam'st—not Sisyphus thy sire,

But great Achilles—noblest while he lived,

And now the mightiest of the mighty dead.

Neop. To hear my father's praise and mine from
thee

Is grateful to my soul—but hear thou too,

What I would seek of thee. The woes which

Heaven

Assigns to mortals, man perforce must bear.

But they who sink in voluntary ills,

As thou dost now, no valid claim can plead

To pardon, or to pity. Thou art grown

Wild by thy sufferings, deaf to counsels sage.

If one in friendship warns thee for thy good,

He wakes thy hate, and is esteemed thy foe.
 Yet I will speak, and Jove, the Lord of oaths,
 Invoke to witness mine unsullied truth.
 Know thou too this, and grave it on thy mind.
 This plague to thee the will of Heaven ordains,
 Since to the guard of Chrysa thy rash foot
 Drew nigh, ¹⁰ the watchful Dragon-Power con-
 cealed,
 Mysterious guardian of th' uncovered shrine.
 Be well assured that never shalt thou win
 Rest from thy grievous pangs, while yon fair sun
 Mounts from the east, and to the west declines,
 Till of thine own free will to Ilium borne,

¹⁰ Serpents were often the guardians of shrines; and more particularly of treasures.—

Melius legatus adîssem

Sauromatas rabidos, servatoremque cruentum

Bebrycii nemoris.

Stat. Theb. xi. 352.

It will also be remembered that Virgil describes the astonishment of Æneas, on seeing one of these animals at his father's tomb.

Incertus geniumne loci, famulumne parentis

Esse putet.

Æn. v. 84.

The sons of Esculapius there shall heal
Thy wasting plague—while thy good shafts, com-
bined

With my right hand, subvert the Trojan towers.
Now will I tell thee how I know the fates.
We seized a captive from beleaguered Troy,
The first of prophets, Helenus, who said
That thus must all things be—and added yet,
That ere the summer fled, had Heaven decreed
The Trojan towers to ruin; and he pledged
His life the forfeit if his words were false.
Since then thou know'st the whole, assenting yield.
It is a proud distinction to be proved
The noblest chief of Greece—first to obtain
Release from all thy sufferings, then to rise
Sublime to Glory's loftiest height, and take
Proud Troy, prolific of so many woes.

Phi. Unwelcome life—ah why detain me still
In day's fair light, nor plunge me in the tomb?
Ah me! what shall I do—or how reject
Such pleas, preferred by friendship so sincere?
But say I yield—how, conscious of such deed
Can I meet Heaven's broad eye? with whom con-
verse?

Ye too,¹ bright orbs, who all my woes behold,
 How will ye brook that I should e'er unite
 With the Atridæ, who have wronged me thus,
 Or with Laertes' all-accursed son?
 No thought of past affliction wounds my heart,
 But fancy pictures what I yet may bear.
 The mind that once gives birth to deeds of baseness,
 A base instructress, trains to every ill.
 Such words I marvel much to hear from thee;
 It ill becomes thyself to sail for Troy,
 Or bring my succour to the foes who scorned
 thee,
 Thy Father's arms despoiling, and the meed
² Which to bold Ajax justice had assigned

¹ Camerarius understands this passage of "his eyes," as at *Œdip. Tyr.* 1270. Brunck seems to refer it to the stars. Literally. "Ye orbs, that witness every thing which happens to me."

² These two lines, Brunck observes, are evidently spurious: for how should Philoctetes know any thing about the contest for the arms of Achilles, beyond what he had heard from Neoptolemus, who did not even mention the name of Ajax as a competitor for the prize? It is, however, possible, that the meaning intended to be conveyed is simply this—that if

Awarding to Ulysses! Wouldst thou then
 With such thyself unite, and force me too?
 No, no, my son—thy former pledge redeem—
 Conduct me home—and thou in Scyros dwell,
 Leaving those villains to the doom they merit.
 Thus wilt thou reap a double meed—from me
 And from thy father—nor, by aiding guilt,
 Show that thy soul is moulded vile as theirs.

Neop. Thy words have show of reason—still I
 wish

That, trusting yet to me and to the Gods,
 Thou from this land with me thy friend wouldst sail.

Phi. What, to the Trojan plains, and the loathed
 race

Of Atreus, with this agonizing foot?

Neop. To those at least who will relieve thy
 foot

From this fell venom, and thy pangs dispel.

Phi. ³ O thou whose pleading would to baseness
 lure me—

the arms had really been given to the most worthy, justice
 would have awarded them to Ajax rather than to Ulysses.

³ ΔΕΙΝὸν αἶνον αἰνέσας—dirum consilium dans—αἰνεῖν sometimes

What dost thou mean?

Neop. A deed I deem to thee
And me most glorious.

Phi. Canst thou argue thus,
Nor blush to think upon the Gods in heaven?

Neop. Why should I blush to seek another's
welfare?

Phi. Dost thou regard my welfare, or the good
Of Atreus' sons?

Neop. In friendship for thyself
I speak—and such a friend my words attest me.

Phi. How, if thou wouldst betray me to my foes?

Neop. Learn, O my friend, to be less fierce in
sorrow.

Phi. I know thee—thou wilt work my ruin yet
By specious words.

Neop. Far be such guile from me!
Thou dost not know my purpose.

Phi. This I know—
The false Atridæ drove me into exile.

signifying suadere, hortari. Æsch. Choeph. 533. Supp. 187.
Other passages are cited by Musgrave. We have given the
sense of the passage rather than the literal translation.

Neop. But think, though once they exciled, may
they not
Seek now to save thee?

Phi. Never shall I gaze,
At least with mine own will, on hated Troy.

Neop. What shall we do then, if our earnest
prayers
And strongest pleas avail not to persuade thee?
For me—'twere easier far to spare my words,
For thee to live, as now, in agony.

Phi. And let me suffer what my fate demands.
But the first pledge, by thy right hand conveyed
To bear me home—this, this, my son, redeem.
Delay not now, nor waste thy thoughts on Troy.
Enough of sighs already hath she cost me.

TROCHAICS.

Neop. Go we then, if such thy pleasure.

Phi. O how generous is the word!

Neop. Plant thy footsteps now more firmly.

Phi. I with all my strength obey.

Neop. How shall I evade the vengeance
Of the Argives?

Phi. Heed it not.

Neop. Should they on my much loved country
Wreak their vengeance?

Phi. I will aid—

Neop. What canst thou achieve to aid me?

Phi. With Alcides' conquering arms—

Neop. Ah, how sayst thou?

Phi. I will drive them
From thy country.

Neop. Then, O friend,
If thou wilt redeem thy promise,
Bid this land a last farewell.

⁴*Herc.* Not yet, O son of Pœas, ere once more
Our accents reach thine ear;
Know, 'tis the voice of Hercules thou hear'st—
His form thine eyes behold.
To watch thy fortunes I awhile have left
My own celestial seat,

⁴ It is hardly requisite to point out in what strict accordance with the canon of Horace is the appearance of Hercules.

*Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit.*

Ars. Poet. 191.

That Jove's almighty mandate I may breathe,
And in his name forbid thy purposed course.
Thou to my words give heed.
Of mine own fortunes would I first remind thee—
What ⁵toils enduring and what perils braved,
I won th' undying glories, which thou seest.
Know, toils like these to thee hath Heaven assigned,
That fame immortal may requite thy deeds.
When with this warrior thou hast sailed to Troy,
First shall thine agonizing pest be healed,
Then, judged the bravest of th' embattled host,
Paris, the guilty cause of all these woes,
Thou with my arrows shalt of life bereave;
And raze proud Troy, and to thy palace send
The richest booty of the captured town—
To thy loved Father by fair Æta's vales.
Whate'er of spoils thy martial deeds requite,
Place as memorials of my shafts and bow
On my funereal pyre!—Achilles' son,
Thee too I thus command—apart from him

⁵ Hac arte Pollux et vagus Hercules

Enisus, arces attigit igneas.

Hor.

Thou canst not take the Trojan towers—nor he
 Apart from thee—bound in confederate faith
⁶Like two fierce lions, each the other guard;
 And I to Ilium's walls will quickly send
 Sage Esculapius, healer of thy wound.
 Once more must Troy be taken by mine arms—
 And O, remember, when her lofty towers
 Are laid in ruins, to revere the Gods.
 Second to this all else great Jove esteems—
⁷True piety alone defies the grave;
 Let mortals live or die—this blooms for ever.

Phi. O thou whose words are dearest to my soul,
 In happy hour vouchsafed,
 I will not disobey thy will.

Neop. My purpose too in this accords with his.

Herc. No longer then the deed delay

⁶ So two young mountain-lions nursed with blood,
 In deep recesses of the gloomy wood,
 Rush fearless to the plains, and, uncontrolled,
 Depopulate the stalls, and waste the fold.

Hom. v. 681.

⁷ Ἀρετὴ δὲ, καὶ θάνη τις, οὐκ ἀπόλλυται
 Ζη δ' οὐκ ἐτ' ὄντος σώματος.

Euríp.

The wind and wave invite—

The favouring gales are breathing from the stern.

Phi. Come, as we go, this earth will I adore.

Farewell, my rocky home,

Ye nymphs who haunt the watery meads,

Thou wild roar of the hoarse resounding sea,

Where oft within my cave

The southern blast in hoary dews

Has bathed my head ;—while many a bitter groan

Responsive to my voice th' ⁸Hermæan mount

Sent in wild murmurs on the echoing blast !

Now, ye pure founts, thou sweet and ⁹crystal stream,

I quit you, quit you now,

An unexpected joy !

Farewell, thou sea-encircled Lemnian plain—

⁸ Hoc erat, in gelido quare Pœantius heros

Voce fatigaret Lemnia saxa suâ.

Co. Trist. v. i. 61.

⁹ For *Λύκιον*, the reading adopted by Brunck, who says, on the authority of the scholiast, that there was a fountain of that name in Lemnos, dedicated to and named from the Lycian Apollo, we have preferred the reading of Erfurdt, *γλύκιον*. If this part of the island were indeed, as Philoctetes said, uninhabited, how came the Lycian Apollo to be worshipped there ?

O speed me with a prosperous course
 Where ¹⁰Fate's resistless will—and the kind words
 Of generous friends impel me, and the God,
 The all-subduing God, who willed it thus!

Ch. Yea, let us all together part,
 Paying due honours to the Ocean-Nymphs
 To come 'protectors of our homeward course.

¹⁰ Μοῖρα μεγάλη. Literally, "Ingens fatum." So Horace,
 Post ingentia fata Deorum in templa recepti.

Hor. Ep. ii. 1, 6.

After the deeds of illustrious lives destined by fate.

¹ Σωτήρας. This word, which is masculine, is here joined
 to the feminine Νύμφαις. Similar instances may be seen.
 Æsch. Sep. Theb. 321, εὐπραξία σωτήρ. So Sophocles, τύχη
 σωτήρ.

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA

ELECTRA

Every reader of the ancient Greek drama must be forcibly struck with the narrowness of the range within which the great tragic writers appear to have been confined, as to the selection of their subjects. The misfortunes of the families of Oedipus and of Atreus, with a few other legends of the same stamp, supplied, in a great measure, the scanty fountain, out of which all were content to draw. Thus, on the same basis are founded the Electra of Sophocles, the Clitëphora of Æschylus, and the Electra of Euripides. Yet it may reasonably be doubted whether, in the present instance at least, this similarity of subject should not

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be attributed rather to a spirit of rivalry than a deficiency of materials. It is palpably evident, that Euripides intends to ridicule the manner in which Æschylus has managed the discovery of Orestes by his sister Electra; and, consequently, that *his* drama must have been produced subsequently to that of his great predecessor. We may, therefore, pronounce, without much hesitation, that the Chœphoræ of Æschylus appeared first of the three, the Electra of Sophocles next, and the Electra of Euripides last.

To decide between the merits of the two former compositions would be a task not less invidious than difficult. If the Chœphoræ of Æschylus is possessed of more striking beauties, the Electra of Sophocles has fewer and less glaring defects. If Æschylus rises into a sublimity which is never equalled by Sophocles, as in the relation of Clytemnestra's dream at the tomb of Agamemnon, neither does Sophocles degenerate into absurd and inconsistent puerilities, as in the recognition of Orestes by his sister, by reason of the exact correspondence of their footsteps. In the one there is a strange mixture of grandeur with meanness, elegance with

coarseness, beauty with deformity—the other is uniformly polished, dignified, and chaste. The former may be compared to the Eagle, which, in its impetuous and irregular flight, at one moment is ascending to the sun, and, at another, swooping downward to the earth; the latter may be likened to the silver Swan, gliding in its calm and majestic course through the regions of the liquid air, neither soaring to confront the effulgence of the meridian orb, nor sinking to soil the purity of its plumage by the pollution of the dust of earth.

With either of these interesting productions the *Electra* of Euripides is scarcely worthy of a comparison. With many strokes of true pathos, and occasional passages of real sublimity, it combines a puerile simplicity which will sometimes excite laughter, and sometimes create disgust. The poet who can gravely inform his audience, that “a rich man needs no more for the supply of the cravings of nature than a poor man,” and, that “strong wine diluted with water will afford a very agreeable beverage,” can hardly enter the lists upon equal terms either with Sophocles or with Æschylus. In proof of our judgement we would refer to the drama itself,

while we proceed to offer a few remarks on that with which we are more immediately concerned.

The point on which all the ancient dramatists have most strikingly failed is the delineation of the female character. Whether in deference to the popular opinion respecting the sex, or in subservience to their own personal prejudices, it is not easy to decide; but the fact is certain, that, with the exception of our author's Antigone, there are few, if any, of the softer sex, among the dramatic characters of the ancients, who are entitled to our unqualified approbation. The Electra of Sophocles is a haughty high-spirited woman, impressed, according to the erroneous morality of that age, with a full persuasion that it was her solemn and imperative duty to avenge her father's death by shedding the blood of her mother, by whom he had been treacherously murdered. For such vindictive and implacable resentment, our modern ladies will not—nor is it desirable that they should—make any allowance. In all other respects, as a sister and a friend, her character is calculated to excite an interest;—at least so long as she is unfortunate, and until she becomes guilty.

The gradual developement of incidents in this drama is admirably managed ; indeed, it is *here* that Sophocles invariably excels. Orestes, after an absence of some years, revisits his native land, for the purpose of avenging the murder of his father, Agamemnon, accompanied by an attendant, who is the adviser and instigator of the deed. After feasting his eyes with the view of his much-loved country—

“ Dulces reminiscitur Argos”—

the old man consults with him on the most politic mode of commencing operations. Though he hears the mourning accents of Electra, and longs to embrace her, yet he acquiesces in the prudent direction of his aged counsellor, and first obeys the command of Phœbus, in presenting offerings at his father's tomb. The remorseless hatred and shameless effrontery of Clytemnestra, the politic servility of Chrysothemis, the dauntless intrepidity of Electra, and the generous sympathy of the Chorus, beautifully diversify the scene, and sustain the interest till tidings arrive that Orestes is no more. The manner in which this intelligence is received is exquisitely characteristic of the different parties: Electra

refuses all consolation, and, on the entrance of Orestes himself, disguised as the bearer of his own ashes, a scene ensues which, for deep and pathetic interest, has no superior in the whole circle of tragic poetry. Taking the urn in her hands, Electra apostrophises her departed brother in terms of such tender lamentation, that Orestes can refrain no longer, but, impelled by the resistless impulse of nature, discovers himself to his sister. Nothing can be more finely imagined or more skilfully executed than this abrupt transition from the depth of misery and despair to the transports of affection and triumph. The exuberant joy of Electra, which cannot be restrained, but breaks forth even amidst the most important consultations, is infinitely more pleasing and natural than the cool composure with which she receives her returning brother, in the dramas both of Æschylus and Euripides.

The work of death is well managed, avoiding on the one hand the improbability of Æschylus, and on the other, the awkward and impotent contrivance of Euripides. Both these dramatists, by making Ægisthus the first victim, suffer the ardour

of revenge to cool, and by this means render the sacrifice of Clytemnestra more hideous and unnatural. Sophocles, with better judgement, has made Clytemnestra the first to fall; and, instead of supposing Electra to be present at and participating in the murder, only assigns to her the office of watching against a surprise. The covering of the dead body with a veil, which is removed by Ægisthus himself, must have been peculiarly effective in representation.

One defect alone is here observable in Sophocles. When Electra hears, behind the scenes, the dying exclamation of her mother, she cries out, "strike, if thou canst, a second blow." This excessive barbarity is neither necessary nor natural; at such a moment Electra, however transported with rage, ought to have remembered that Clytemnestra was still her mother. This fault, nevertheless, is not chargeable so much upon Sophocles as upon the age in which he lived; and it is but fair to remark, that his writings, taken as a whole, present the most attractive specimen of moral sentiment and fervent, though erring, piety, which remains to us out of the wreck of antiquity.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ATTENDANT.

ORESTES.

ELECTRA.

CHORUS OF VIRGINS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

MUTA PERSONA.

PYLADES.

ELECTRA.

ATTENDANT, ORESTES, PYLADES.

Att. O son of Agamemnon, who to Troy
Led the confederate host, now mayst thou gaze
On scenes, which ever woke thy fond desire.
Here is the ancient Argos, which thy soul
So thirsted to behold,—this is the grove
Of wandering Io,¹ frenzy-stricken maid ;

¹ 'Οιστροπλήξ. This word is borrowed from the *Prom. Vinct.* of Æschylus, in which drama Iö is introduced. Her story is also narrated by Ovid.

And this, Orestes, the ²Lycæan mart
 Of the wolf-slaughtering God. That on the left
 Is Juno's fane renowned, and whither now
 We have arrived, thou see'st the rich Mycenæ.
 This is the home of ³Pelops' race, defiled
 With frequent murders;—on thy father's death,
 From thy true sister's hand receiving thee,
 I bore thee hence,—preserved thee,—trained thee up
 To man,—Avenger of thy father's blood.
 Now then, Orestes, and thou best of friends,
 Now, Pylades, ye must resolve at once
 What deed should be emprized. Lo! the glad
 beam
 Of orient⁴ morn awakes the sylvan choir
 To matin hymns of gladness,—the pale stars
 Wane on the brow of Night. Ere from the gates
 One foot shall issue, be our plans matured

² Ἀγορὰ Λύκειος, a place sacred to Apollo. Λυκίος, or λυκοκτονός, the wolf-slayer; so called from his killing wolves when under the disguise of a shepherd to Admetus.—
 Francklin.

³ Sævam Pelopis domum.—Hor. lib. i. 6, 8.

⁴ Matutini volucrum sub culmine cantus.—Virg. Æn. viii.
 456.

No lingering pause th' important hour allows,
But we must do and dare.

Ores. Most faithful thou,
Most dear of servants! how dost thou evince,
By manifest signs, thy firm unsullied truth,—
E'en as the generous steed, though worn with age,
In peril's hour his slumbering spirit wakes,
⁵ And pricks his ears erect, so thou too warm'st
Our zeal, and art thyself the first to follow.
Now I will speak my purpose;—do thou lend
Prompt audience to my words,—and where I seem
To swerve from prudence, curb my hastier mood.

When to the Pythian oracle I came
A suppliant, asking how I should exact
Just retribution for my Father's blood,
Phœbus, as thou shalt hear, this answer gave;—
That I, devoid of arms or martial host,
Should strike by stratagem the righteous blow.
Since then the God's response we thus have heard,
Go thou, when fit occasion shall arise,

⁵ Si qua sonum procul arma dedere,
Stare loco nescit: micat auribus, et tremit artus.

Virg. Geo. iii. 83, 84.

Within the palace,—learn what passes there,
 That thou mayst bring a clear and full report.
 On thee, thus changed by years and worn with time,
 Thus habited,⁶ suspicion will not fall.
 Be this thy tale,—A Phocian stranger thou,
 From ⁷Phanoteus despatched, who is esteemed
 By these the truest of their foreign ⁸friends;
 Say,—and ⁹on oath confirm it, that, by fate
 Urged to his doom, Orestes is no more,
 Hurl'd at the Pythian contest from his car,

⁶ Ἡνδισμένον, properly *floribus ornatum*. Musgrave proposes, *canis capillis variegatum*. We have followed Potter: “Thus attired.”

⁷ Phanoteus. A small midland town of Phocis, says Francklin; and Brumoy even translates it Panope. With this rendering Erfurdt appears to accord, though that it is the proper name of a man, is evident from l. 663 of his own edition.

⁸ Δορυξένος, literally, “ex hoste factus hospes.” Here, however, it appears to denote simply *hospes*.

⁹ Much trouble is taken by commentators and translators to clear Orestes from the guilt of perjury. Lamentable blindness of superstition,—where a hero can only be exculpated by implicating a god! Phœbus, in the Eumenides of Æschylus, and Ion of Euripides, does not appear to very great advantage among his fellow divinities.

In the swift race. Thus let thy story run.
 First, with libations and with these shorn locks,
 Crowning my father's tomb, as willed the God,
 We, from the spot returning, in our hands
 Will bear the vessel formed with sides of brass,
 Which, as thou know'st, lies hid within the wood;
 That, with dissembling words, we may convey
 The welcome tidings,—how in death consumed
 And burnt to ashes is my mortal frame.
 Nought will it grieve me, when in words deceased
 In act I live, and bear away renown.
 'Tis no ill ¹⁰omen which ensures success.
 Oft have I known the wise, accounted dead
 In rumour's empty tale, to their own home
 Return once more, with brighter glories crowned.
 So would I trust, with equal fame preserved,
 I too shall shine a death-star to my foes.
 But, O my father-land,—ye Gods who rule

¹⁰ The superstition of the Greeks, respecting words of good or ill omen, is remarkable. A striking instance occurs in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, where the messenger from Corinth salutes *Œdipus* “King of Thebes,” before he communicates the intelligence of the death of *Polybus*.

O'er this my country, bid me welcome here,
And on my path your prospering smiles bestow:
Thou, too, O palace of mine ancient sires,
To thee I come, by Heaven's own impulse led,
To cleanse, in just revenge, thy blood-stained halls.
O send me not dishonoured from the land,
But graced with wealth, restorer of my house!
Enough of words. Be it thy care, old man,
To execute thy task with caution meet,
And we will hence,—in every arduous deed
Occasion reigns great arbiter of all.

[ELECTRA comes out of the palace.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, ATTENDANT.

Elec. Ah me! unhappy me!

Att. Methought, my son, within the palace halls
Some sad domestic sighed in stifled woe.

Ores. Is't not the poor Electra? Wilt thou here
Awhile we pause and listen to her sorrows?

Att. It must not be. The will of Loxias first
Must be obeyed. Now pour we to thy sire
The purifying stream,—for this will bring

Might in the act, and victory at the close.

[ORESTES *and* ATTENDANT *retire.* ELECTRA

comes forward.

Elec. O pure ethereal light,
Thou air, with 'earth pervading equal space,
How many a dirge of wild lament,
How many a blow upon this bleeding breast,
Hast thou for me attested, when dun Night
Withdraws her murky veil.
Through the long hours of darkness, each loathed
couch
Of these sad halls is conscious of my woe,
How mine unhappy father I bewail,
Whom not in far barbaric clime
Ensanguined Mars laid low;
But my base mother, with her paramour,
Ægisthus, as the woodman fells the oak,
Hewed down with murderous axe.
No heart, save mine, with gentle pity wrung,

¹ Ἰσομοῖρος—cui portio par datur. There are various opinions concerning this word, some interpreting ἀήρ, darkness. Light holding equal sway with darkness. The same thought occurs, Æsch. Chœph. 316, σκότῳ φάος ἰσόμοιρον.

Laments for thee, my father, though thy doom
Such pity well demands.
But never will I cease my wail,
Nor hush my bitter cries, while yet I gaze
On yon all-radiant stars,
Gaze on the orb of day;—
But, like the hapless nightingale, bereft
Of her loved brood, before my native home
Pour the loud plaint of agony to all.
Ye dark abodes of Dis and Proserpine,
Thou Hermes, guide to hell—thou Awful Curse,
And ye, dread Furies, Offspring of the Gods,
Who on the basely murdered look,
On those who mount by stealth th' unhallowed
couch;
Come, aid me, and avenge the blood
Of my beloved sire,
And give my absent brother to mine arms;
Alone no longer can I bear the weight
Of this o'erwhelming woe.

[*Enter* CHORUS.]

ELECTRA, CHORUS.²

STROPHE I.

Ch. O daughter of a mother³ sunk in crimes,
 Why, why, Electra, dost thou pine
 In ever-wasting woe,
 For Agamemnon, by the wiles ensnared
 Of thy most impious mother, and betrayed
 To evil hands? If it be lawful thus
 To speak, like doom be his who did the deed.

Elec. Offspring of sires illustrious, ye are come

² “It has been the subject of serious dispute,” says Potter, “whether the Chorus is formed of virgins or of matrons. They are not once styled παρθένοι; nor, on the other hand, is there any allusion to their married state. Τυνάξεις is a common term. It is more consonant to manners, that the friends and companions of Electra should be virgins.” Yet the Chorus address Electra by the term τέκνον, which would seem to intimate that they were older than herself; and she, as Brunck observes, could not be less than twenty-five years of age. However, if it be not more probable to consider them as virgins, it is perhaps more poetical—

“Dabiturque licentia sumpta pudenter.”

³ Δυστανοτάτας, the same with ἐξωλεστάτης. So δίστηνε, Aj. 1307.

Thinking to solace my despair.—
 I know your love,—I feel it,—in no part
 Does it escape me,—yet I cannot cease
 To weep in anguish o'er my Father's fall.
 But ye, whose gentle bosoms well requite
 The love that warms mine own,
 O leave me, leave me, to indulge my woe!

ANTISTROPHE I.

Ch. And yet from Pluto's lake, man's common home,
 Thy sire thou never canst redeem
 By shrieks or fervent prayers.
 But thou, meanwhile, from temperate grief impelled
 To ceaseless tears, art sinking in despair!
 When from thy sorrows no release remains,
 Why cherish thus intolerable woe?

Elec. Senseless were he who could so soon forget
 A parent's miserable doom!
 And more congenial to a soul like mine
 Is she who mourns for Itys,—Itys still,
 The timid bird, sad ⁶ messenger of Jove.

⁴ Διὸς ἄγγελος. But this appellation is the exclusive property of the eagle. Can it mean "Veris nuntius," Διὸς being taken for "verni temporis?" The emendation, εἰαρος ἄγγελος,

O wretched ⁵ Niobe, thee too I deem
 Divine, in rocky tomb
 Who dost for ever weep, for ever sigh!

STROPHE II.

Ch. Yet, daughter, not alone on thee
 Of mortal birth such ills descend;
 In this thy griefs transcend not theirs within,
 Sprung from one source, to thee by birth allied.
 This doth Chrysothemis endure,
 This Iphianassa bears,
 And He, whose youthful spring in secret wanes,
 Whom, yet with glory crowned,
 May proud Mycenæ's towers
 Greet to his throne restored, by favouring Jove
 Led to his native land, thy loved Orestes.

Elec. Whom I unceasingly await, unblest

is inadmissible on account of the metre. The nightingale, says Erfurdt, is called the messenger of Jove, because she is the messenger of spring, and Jove is the director of the seasons. With this solution we must, perforce, be satisfied.

⁵ We need hardly refer to the exquisite description of Niobe in the *Antigone*, vol. i. p. 261. So Ovid. *Metam.* iii. 6, 311.

Fixa cacumine montis

Liquitur, et lacrymas etiamnum marmora manant.

With smiling children and connubial love,—
 In tears dissolved, and still oppressed
 With unexhausted woe,—while he forgets
 My cares, my fond instructions. What, oh what
 Of faithless tidings hath not mocked mine ear?
 He still desires to come,
 Desiring, yet delays.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Ch. Nay, daughter, cheer thee, cheer thee yet!
 Still in yon starry heaven supreme
 Jove, all-beholding, all-directing, dwells.
 To him commit thy vengeance, nor indulge
 This bitter vehemence of wrath;
 Nor yet thy wrongs forget.
 Time is a god who blunts the edge of woe.
 Since nor on Crisa's pastured shore
 Delays the martial son

Of Agamemnon, never to return,
 Nor the stern God who rules in Acheron.

Elec. Yet of mine earthly date long space hath
 passed

In hope, vain hope, nor can I yet endure,
 Who pine in orphan wretchedness,
 Whom no kind friend with manly might upholds.

Scorned like some foreign slave, despised I tread
 The palace of my fathers, in the garb
 Of servitude arrayed,
 With scanty food sustained.

STROPHE III.

Ch. Sad was indeed the voice of his return,
 Sad in thy father's halls the groan,
 When from the brazen axe unsparing fell
 The adverse blow of death.—
 'Twas ^ofalsehood prompted, lust fulfilled the deed.
 A deed of horror, fearfully conceived,
 Whether a God these acts of darkness wrought,
 Or one of mortal race!

Elec. O day, of all that ever shone
 Most hateful to my soul!
 O night, O traitorous banquet, fraught to me
 With deep unutterable woes,
 When my unhappy sire
 Met from two murderous hands th'inglorious death;

^o Ægisthus and Clytemnestra are said to have watched Agamemnon, as he came out of the bath, when they threw over his head a shirt without any opening at the neck; entangled in this they murdered him; thus was the scheme laid by falsehood and treachery, and executed by lust.—Francklin.

Those hands my life betrayed,
Those hands my ruin wrought.
May He who reigns on high Olympus' brow,
With equal woes that deed of death repay;
Never may joy and peace accordant smile
On those who dared the crime.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Ch. Bethink thee yet, nor still indulge thy wrath.
Hast thou no thought, from what a height
Already hast thou fallen into woes
Shameful as undeserved?
Thou dost but heap fresh insult on thy head,
Raising by thine inexorable hate
Continual strife. This contest with the strong,—
It cannot tend to good.

Elec. By woes, stern woes am I constrained;
The frenzy of my wrath
I know, I feel—yet, maddening in my grief,
I will not curb my plaints
While life yet warms my breast!
What, O beloved friends, what lenient word
Of hope can soothe me now,
From whom that seeks my weal?
Cease then, your unavailing comforts cease,

For never, never shall my woes be hushed!
 And never shall I rest from misery,—
 Eternal is my grief.

EPODE.

Ch. Yet do I speak with fond regard,
 Fond as a mother's anxious love,
 That thus thou heap not woes on woes!

Elec. What is the measure of my wretchedness?
 How should a generous heart neglect the dead?
 By whom of men are thoughts like these indulged?
 O ne'er from such be honour mine,—
 Ne'er, should I wed the worthiest of mankind,
 Could I in peace repose, dishonouring thus
 My much-loved sire, or cease the frantic flight
 Of shrill-resounding groans;
 For if the dull earth cover thus the blood
 Of him who basely died,
 And they who wrought his fall,
 Repay not life for life;
 Then perish shame for aye,
 And piety be banished from mankind!

Ch. I came, my daughter, anxious to promote
 Thy welfare and mine own,—but if I err
 Do thou prevail, and be it mine to follow.

Elec. I blush, O friends, if from my ceaseless groans
You deem me conquered by excess of grief;
Yet, since by stern necessity constrained,
Forgive me. How, from lofty lineage sprung,
How could a woman curb her flowing tears,
A father's wrongs beholding,—which by day,
By night, are ever present to my soul,
And all fresh-springing rather than decayed.
First from my mother, her who gave me birth,
My heaviest wrongs arise;—then in these halls,
Mine own ancestral halls, must I perforce
Consort with those who shed my father's blood,
And yield a forced obedience, since by them
My various wants are slighted or supplied.
Think, too, what days of agony are mine,
When on my father's seat enthroned I view
The wretch Ægisthus;—see him proudly wear
My father's robes of empire, and insult
The Gods with foul libations on that hearth
Which erst he sprinkled with my Father's blood.
And this, the last and most revolting wrong,
I see th' assassin share my Father's couch
With my abandoned mother, if to her
I still can give a mother's hallowed name.
Such is her bold presumption, with that wretch,

That blood-stained villain, undismayed she lives
 By the avenging Furies unappalled.
 But, as in mockery of that deed of death,
 Still when the day revolves on which she slew
 My hapless father by perfidious wiles,
 She leads the jocund dance, and to the Gods,
 Her guardian Gods, the votive victim slays.
 While I, unhappy! forced to witness all,
 Weep—waste away,—and evermore bewail
 Th' ill-omened ⁷ feast that bears my father's name.
 Yet vent my griefs alone: I dare not else
 Indulge the mournful luxury of tears.
 For thus my mother, bold at least in words,
 Pursues me ever with upbraidings keen.
 “Wretch—hateful to the Gods! to thee alone
 Is then thy father dead? Of all mankind
 Doth none deplore his doom, save only thou?
 Ill fate be thine, nor may th' infernal Gods
 E'er grant thee freedom from thy present woes.”

⁷ Clytemnestra, in imitation of the solemn honours paid to the gods and heroes on the new moons, called, therefore, *ἑμμένα ἑσπὰ*, instituted a monthly festival, with sacrifices to the Gods, her preservers, on the day on which Agamemnon was murdered. This was celebrated with songs and dances, and a feast insolently called *Epulæ Agamemnoniæ*.—Potter.

Thus she upbraids me;—and if one remark,
Orestes will return, infuriate then
She cries aloud—“And art not thou the cause,
And is not this thy deed, who from my care
Didst steal and bear away the young Orestes?
Yet know at least due recompense awaits thee.”
Thus doth she rave, and comes to fire her wrath
Her truly noble and most valiant husband,
That nerveless dastard, that reproach of man,
Who fights his battles with a woman’s aid.
While I, awaiting my Orestes still,
To end my woes, in vain impatience pine.
He meditates the deed, but nought achieves,
Blighting my present as my future hopes.
In such a lot, my friends, how hard to keep
A meek and temperate prudence. Plunged in ills,
Fain must we be subservient to our doom.

Ch. Say, while thou breath’st these words, where
is Ægisthus?
Is he within, or hath he left his home?

Elec. He is far distant; were my tyrant near
I could not thus beyond the portals range.
He now is in the country.

Ch. Then indeed,
With more assurance can we here indulge

An open converse.

Elec. Since he is afar
Ask boldly what thou wilt.

Ch. First would I seek
What tidings of thy brother,—will he come,
Or doth he linger yet?—I long to know.

Elec. He talks, but does not prove his words by
action.

Ch. Oft do men linger in a bold emprise.

Elec. I did not linger when I saved his life.

Ch. Cheer thee; right noble is thy brother's soul,
And prompt to aid his friends.

Elec. I trust it is,
Or had not borne the load of life so long.

Ch. Hush! say no more,—without the palace
gates

I see thy sister, fair ⁸ Chrysothemis,

⁸ Chrysothemis is mentioned by Homer, Il. ix.

Yet more, three daughters in his court are bred,

And each well worthy of a royal bed,

Laodice and Iphigenia fair,

And bright Chrysothemis with golden hair,

Iphianassa is in the original, and ought to have been in the translation, as Iphigenia was supposed to have been immolated at Aulis. Laodice is, in all probability, the same with Electra.

Of the same parents born ; lo ! in her hands
She bears the funeral offerings to the dead.

[*Enter* CHRYSOTHEMIS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Chry. What converse, sister, art thou holding
here,
Beyond the portal ranging thus at large ?
Wilt thou not yet from sad experience learn
To curb this wild and unavailing wrath ?
I too am conscious of indignant grief
For these our present wrongs, and had I power
Would prove what feelings to our foes I bear.
Now, plunged in miseries, better furl our sails
Nor dream of vengeance where we cannot wound.
O could I win thee thus with me to act—
Though what I speak, not that is right alone,
But what thou judgest. Would I live as fits
The free, I must obey my Lords in all.

Elec. At least 'tis shame, of such a father born,
Thus to forget him, and subservient court
A guilty mother's favour. Well I know

These admonitions all are taught by her,
And not the dictates of thine own free thought.
Choose then whiche'er thou wilt—to be unwise,
Or in thy wisdom to forget thy friends ;
Thou who didst late affirm, if strength were thine,
Of these thy just abhorrence thou would'st prove,
Yet aid'st me not, but dost impede the act.
Say, adds not this to wretchedness the shame
Of cowardice? Teach thou, or learn from me
What it could profit to forbear my tears.
Do not I live? In misery, I confess,
Yet this for me sufficeth. When I pay
Due honours to the dead—if there be aught
Of pleasure in those honours, *they* are grieved ;
Thou dost but hate them with the hate of words,
Aiding in acts the murderers of thy Sire.
But never, never, though the gifts that grace
Thy happier lot, were proffered to my need
Would I submit to them. Let the rich board
Be spread for thee—and plenty flow around—
This be my only sustenance—that I live
To gall their hearts. Their honours I disdain,
Nor wouldst thou prize them, wert thou truly wise.
Now, when thou mightst have borne thy Father's
name,

Noblest of men, be called thy mother's child.
 For thus to all shalt thou appear most base,
 False to thy murdered Father, and thy friends.

Ch. Nought, by the Gods, in anger:—wouldst
 thou stoop

To learn from her, and she in turn from thee,
 The words of both might tend perchance to good.

Chry. To words like these, my friends, am I inured,
 Nor to her memory had I e'er recalled
 The subject—but of coming ills I heard,
 Which soon will hush her long laments for ever.

Elec. Speak then this weighty evil—if thou
 name

One that can gall more deeply than the wrongs
 Which now I suffer—I oppose no more.

Chry. Nay, I will truly tell thee all I know.
 Unless thou cease thy wailings, they design
 To send thee hence where never shalt thou see
 The sun's glad light—but,⁹ shut in dreary cell

⁹ The resemblance between this menace and the punishment inflicted upon Antigone, will forcibly strike the reader; as will also the coincidence between the sentiments of the different parties,—Electra and Chrysothemis being the exact counterparts of Antigone and Ismene.

Far from this land, shalt pour thy dirge of woe.
Reflect thou then—nor when in miseries plunged
Upbraid thy sister. Thou mayst yet be wise.

Elec. What—is this doom, in truth decreed for me?

Chry. Soon as Ægisthus to his home returns.

Elec. For this at least may he return with speed.

Chry. Why, O unhappy, on thine own rash head
Thus imprecate destruction?

Elec. Let him come
If deed like this, indeed, he meditate.

Chry. That thou may'st feel new miseries? Dost
thou rave?

Elec. That far away I may escape from you.

Chry. Hast thou no thought for life?

Elec. A life is mine
So blest, it well may win thee to admire!

Chry. Blest it might be, if thou wouldst yield
to wisdom.

Elec. Instruct not me to wrong the friends I
honour.

Chry. I would but teach submission to the
mighty.

Elec. Be such base flattery thine. I am not
formed
For aught so abject.

Chry. Yet 'twere well at least
If we must perish, not to fall through rashness.

Elec. Nay, we will fall, if we must fall in-
deed,

Our Father's doom avenging.

Chry. But in this
Our sire will grant forgiveness to his children.

Elec. To praise thy counsels were a dastard's
part.

Chry. Wilt thou not hear my reasonings nor
assent?

Elec. No. May I never be thus lost to wisdom.

Chry. Then will I hence, mine errand to fulfil.

Elec. What errand—whither dost thou bear those
off'rings?

Chry. My mother sends me at my father's tomb
To make the due libations.

Elec. What—to him
Of all mankind her most detested foe?

Chry. And whom she murdered, since thou'lt
have me say so.

Elec. By whom persuaded? who hath counselled
this?

Chry. From some nocturnal vision, as I deem.

Elec. O my ancestral Gods, aid, aid me now!

Chry. Hast thou then aught of hope from these
her terrors?

Elec. Wouldst thou relate the vision, I could tell
thee.

Chry. Scant information can I give thee here.

Elec. Tell all thou canst. Oft light and trivial
words

Have ruined mortals, or to greatness raised them.

Chry. 'Tis rumoured that she¹⁰ saw thy sire and
mine

Present again before her, from the tomb

To life ascending—then in earth he fixed

The ancient sceptre, which of old he bore

And now Ægisthus bears, and from its top

Sprouted a vigorous scion, which increased

Till its broad shade o'er all Mycenæ spread.

I heard her thus relating when she told

Her dubious vision to the radiant Sun.

But more than this I know not, save that urged

By anxious dread, she sends me to the tomb.

I now conjure thee by our country's Gods,

¹⁰ The idea of this dream is borrowed from the *Chœphoræ* of Æschylus, where Clytemnestra dreams that she was brought to bed of a dragon, to whom she gives suck, and who draws out all her blood.

Yield to my prayers, nor fall by utter rashness;—
 If thou repel me now, when all too late
 Involved in misery thou wilt seek mine aid.

Elec. Nay, dearest sister! of these offerings
 nought

Present thou at the tomb. It is not just,
 It is not pious from that woman-fiend
 To bear funereal honours, and to pour
 Libations to my father. Cast them forth
 To the wild winds, or hide them in the dust,
 Deep—deep—that never to my Father's tomb
 Th' accursed thing may reach—but when she dies
 Lie hid in earth to grace her sepulchre.
 For had she not been formed of all her sex
 The most abandoned, never had she' crowned
 These loathed libations to the man she slew.
 Thinkst thou the dead entombed could e'er receive,
 In friendly mood, such obsequies from her
 By whom he fell dishonoured, like a foe—

¹ Brunck, on the authority of Virgil, (*Sanguinis et sacri pateras*,) seems to imagine that these libations were necessarily accompanied with the blood of a slain victim. It appears, however, *Eur. Orest.* 115, that honey, milk, and wine, only were offered.

While on her mangled victim's² head she wiped
His blood for expiation? Think'st thou then
These empty rites can for such guilt atone?
O no! leave this vain errand unfulfilled—
Cut from thy head th' extremest curls—and take
From mine these locks—though scanty—yet the best
I have—to him present this votive³ hair,
And this my zone, unwrought with regal pomp.
Kneel too—and pray, that he would soon arise
To aid his children 'gainst their deadly foes;
And that Orestes with more vigorous hand
May live, and dash his enemies to earth,
That henceforth we may crown his honoured tomb
With costlier offerings than we now present.
I think, I trust, at length he marks our woes,

² The murderer of any person, among the Ancients, was accustomed to wipe the sword, or other instrument of murder, on the hair of the deceased, and then to wash it; concluding that this process would wipe away the guilt also.

³ The hair was an offering usually dedicated to the dead. Thus Canace, in Ovid, regrets that she was not permitted to adorn her lover's tomb with her locks. The same custom appears to have prevailed among the eastern nations. Compare Ezek. xxvii. 31.

And hence affrights her with these fearful dreams.
Now, O my sister, aid thyself and me,
Aid him, the best and dearest of mankind,
Our common Father, resting in the grave.

Ch. The virgin's words are pious. Thou,
beloved,
If thou art wise, her bidding wilt perform.

Chry. I will—no plea the righteous deed affords
For two to question, but at once to act.
But of the deed I purpose, by the Gods!
O friends beloved, unbroken silence keep,
Since, should it reach my mother, I should meet
A bitter guerdon for the bold attempt.

[*Exit* CHRYSOTHEMIS.]

Chorus.

STROPHE.

If true prophetic skill be mine,
If aught of wisdom's ray divine;
Soon shall Avenging Justice here
Her own dread harbinger appear—
With hand of might, and threatening brow
She cannot, will not linger now;

But soon, my daughter, shall pursue
The track of guilt, and punish too!
So from this joy-awakening dream
In confidence I fondly deem.
At least the King of Greece, thy Sire,
Oblivion ne'er shall know;—
That ancient axe, a weapon dire
Which laid the Monarch low
Mid scorn and insult to expire,
Shall ne'er forget the blow!

ANTISTROPHE.

With many a foot of matchless speed,
With many a hand of deadly deed,
Erinnys, veiled in ambush now,
With brazen tread shall track the foe.
Aye, she hath marked the lawless tie,
The bond of nuptial infamy—
Plighted in blood—by right unblest—
And hence forebodes my prescient breast
That ne'er shall this portentous sign
Pass, unfulfilled by wrath divine,
On those who wrought—who shared the shame.—
No faith shall man repose
On visions which in darkness came,

Or fates the Gods disclose,
Unless this nightly dream proclaim
A limit to our woes.

EPODE.

O race, with countless labours fraught,
By Pelops won in olden time,
What wide affliction hast thou wrought
To this devoted clime.
Since ⁴Myrtilus in ocean deep
Was headlong hurled to Death's cold sleep,
Hurled from his radiant car of gold,
With insult fierce and uncontrouled ;

⁴ Myrtilus was charioteer to Œnomaus, the father of Hippodamia. Having been warned, by an oracle, to beware of a son-in-law, he refused to give his daughter in marriage to any but one who could vanquish him in a chariot-race. Death was the penalty of failure. Thirteen chiefs had already perished, when Pelops, having gained over Myrtilus, entered the lists and became victor, the charioteer of Œnomaus having treacherously provided his master with an old chariot, which broke down in the course. When, however, Myrtilus came to demand the reward of his perfidy, Pelops threw him headlong into the sea; whence Mercury, the father of Myrtilus, revenged the death of his son upon the descendants of Pelops.

Nor woe hath passed, nor dire disgrace
Unfelt by this devoted race!

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Cly. Again it seems, thou dar'st to roam at large,
He who was wont to check thee—lest abroad
Thou shame thy friends—Ægisthus is not here;
Nor in his absence dost thou aught regard
My will. Unnumbered calumnies are breathed
By thee to every ear, that I am lost
To shame, and pass beyond the bounds of right,
To thee and thine injurious. I, in sooth,
Am slow to outrage, and the taunts I breathe
Are but an answer to thine own reproaches.—
Thy plea is still thy Father, and nought else,
Murdered by me. By me? I own the deed,
Nor would I seek to disavow the charge.
'Twas Justice struck the blow, not I alone,
Whom duty calls thee, wert thou wise, to aid:—
This Father, whom thy ceaseless tears lament,
Alone of Greeks could brook to immolate

Thy sister to the Gods—as if the pangs
Of travail had been his, as they were mine.
Enough of this.—And tell me for whose weal
He slew my daughter—wilt thou say for Greece?
No claim had Greece to slay my guiltless child.
Was it for Meneläus? yet if thus
He slew my daughter for his brother's sake,
Should I not claim requital for her blood?
Did not ⁵two children call the Spartan sire,
For whom to perish first was doubly meet,
From parents sprung who both had caused the war?
And did remorseless Death desire to feed
On my poor child, and not on Helen's too?
Or was their hated Father's love extinct
To his own offspring, and were natural ties
Dear but to Meneläus?—Were not these
Acts of a senseless and abandoned parent?
Such are my thoughts, though far removed from
thine.
Such, could she speak them, were my murdered
daughter's.

⁵ Hesiod says that, besides Hermione, Menelaus had a son, named Nicostratus, by Helena. Sophocles availed himself of this authority.—Potter.

Nought do I then repent me of the deed;
And, if my actions seem unwise to thee,
Thy just resolve maintaining, blame thy friends.

Elec. At least, thou wilt not now affirm that I
By words of insult challenged keen retort;
But, if thou sanction, I at once would speak
In my dead father's and my sister's cause.

Cly. Take then my sanction—hadst thou ever
thus
Begun thy speech, I had not shrunk to hear thee.

Elec. Then will I speak. Thou freely hast
avowed

My father's murder. What avowal then
Could be than this more shameful, whether made
With justice, or without it? I will prove
At least thou didst not strike the blow from justice
But smooth persuasion of that impious wretch
With whom thou now consortest, led thee on.
Ask now the huntress Dian, for what crime
At Aulis she detained the Grecian host;
Or I will tell thee, since thou canst not ask
Of the chaste goddess. When, as I have heard,
My sire was sporting in her sacred grove,
He from its covert roused a dappled stag,
Stately with branching horns, and slew the prey,

With vaunting words exulting. Hence incensed,
Long did Latona's virgin child detain
Th' assembled Argives, till my sire should pay
His child a ransom for the slaughtered stag.
Such was the sacrifice—for else the host
Homeward, or e'en to Ilion, ne'er had sailed.
Constrained, and much resisting, scarce he brooked
To offer her—and not for Meneläus.—
Nay—for I state thy plea—if he but wished
To serve and aid his brother by the deed,
Was it thy part to slay him? By what law?
Beware, such laws ordaining to mankind,
Lest to thyself just vengeance thou ordain
And late remorse. If blood cry out for blood,
Thou then shouldst be the first to perish.—Thou,
If the due guerdon of thy crimes were paid.
Beware, nor urge such unavailing plea.
Tell, if thou wilt, requiting what misdeed
Thou now art working acts of foulest shame,
With a base wretch consorting, by whose aid
Thy guilty hand achieved my father's fall,
And bear'st him children, thrusting from thy house
The virtuous offspring of a virtuous line?
How could I vindicate such deeds? Or still
Wilt thou allege this vengeance, too, thou tak'st

For thy slain daughter? Shameless were the word,
E'en shouldst thou speak it—'tis not well to wed
An enemy, though for a daughter's sake.
But here I may not even dare advise thee,
For thou dost straight upbraid me with the crime
Of slander 'gainst my mother—yet, be sure,
Naught save a haughty mistress do I deem thee.
No mother's heart is thine to me, who spend
A weary life of never-ceasing woes;
By thee inflicted—and thy paramour;
While he afar, scarce rescued from thy rage,
Orestes, lingers on his joyless date,
Whom oft thou dost accuse me to have nursed
Thy future murderer. Had the power been mine,
Ere this, know well, the deed had been performed.
Go, then, and for these words to all proclaim me
Abandoned—slandorous—insolent of speech—
O'ercharged with bold presumption. If my mind
Is formed by Nature to such shameless deeds,
My mother need not blush to own her child.

Ch. I see her breathing rage—but if her ire
Be just, I ween, awakes but slight regard.

Cly. And what regard can she at least demand
Who thus insults a mother, and that too

At⁶ such an age ? Seems she not well prepared
To dare the vilest deeds without a blush ?

Elec. Yet know, e'en now I blush, although to
thee

I seem not—for I feel how ill such deeds
Befit my nature and become my birth !
But thine inveterate hate and shameless crimes
Constrain me, though reluctant, thus to act ;
For deeds of baseness by the base are taught.

Cly. ⁷ Insolent wretch—do I, my words or deeds,
Constrain thee thus reproachfully to speak ?

Elec. Thine the reproach—not mine—for thine
the deed.

No marvel deeds should find congenial words.

Cly. So Artemis, my tutelary Power,

⁶ At such an age. Does this allude to her extreme youth, or maturer age ? Though the context seems to favour the former supposition, the latter appears more consistent with the probable age of Electra, which, as we have already observed on Brunck's authority, could not be *less* than twenty-five, according to Sophocles ; while according to Æschylus and Euripides, she must have been at least ten years older.

⁷ Θρέμμα ἀναιδές—θρέμμα. Animal—quicquid alitur,—generally used in a bad sense. Blomfield.

Preserve me, as thou meet'st a due reward
When home returns Ægisthus.

Elec. Dost thou see?

Rage bears thee onward, though thou badst me speak
Whate'er I would, nor know'st thou how to listen.

Cly. Wilt thou not cease thy wild^s ill-boding cries,
While to the Gods these offerings I present,
Since I at least allowed thee to speak all?

Elec. I suffer—I exhort thee—pay thy vows;
Nor still persist to censure thus my words,
For I will say no more.

Cly. Thou on our rites
Attendant, of all fruits oblations bring,
That to this King due homage I may pay,
To chase the terrors that distract my soul.
O Tutelary Phœbus, hear my prayer—
My secret prayer—for not among my friends
My speech is made—nor be in every ear
The cause divulged, which hither leads me now—
Lest in malignant hate with clamorous spleen

^s The Ancients carried their superstition to such an excess, as to regard, in the light of a fatal presage, whatever they heard, either mournful or displeasing, during their sacrifices. Hence the expression “*Favete linguis.*”—Brumoy.

She through the city breathe a slanderous tale.
But hear me thus, for I will thus address thee.
This night in visions of my bed I saw
A dream of two-fold import—if it be
Propitious, grant me then, Lycæan King,
To hail its glad fulfilment—if 'tis fraught
With evils, let them on my foes recoil.
If secret treachery plots to hurl me down
From present bliss, O blast the false design,
And grant me still, in prosperous peace serene,
To guide the house and sway the sceptre proud
Of the Atridæ, circled with the friends
Whose converse now delights me—and with those
Of mine own offspring, who, with friendly mind,
Nor seek my downfall nor conspire my woe.
Lycæan Phœbus, hear with favouring mind,
And grant the blessings which our vows implore.
What still remains unsaid, though I be mute
Is known, I deem, to thee, a potent God:—
Nought can be hidden from the race of Jove.

Enter ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT, CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Att. How, O ye strangers, can I surely learn,
If these are King Ægisthus' royal halls.

Ch. They are, O stranger.—Thou hast rightly
guessed.

Att. And rightly deem I this his royal spouse?
Her form and aspect well become a Queen.

Ch. Here too thou hast guessed rightly. 'Tis herself.

Att. Hail, Queen! To thine Ægisthus and to thee
News of glad import from a friend I bear.

Cly. I hail the omen, but would first demand
Who sent thee hither?

Att. Phanoteus of Phocis,
Charged with important tidings.

Cly. What, O stranger?

True was the friend by whom thou wert de-
spatched;—

Thy words, I doubt not, will be friendly too.

Att. I speak in brief—Orestes is no more.

Elec. Ah wretched me—This day I perish too!

Cly. What say'st, what say'st thou, stranger?
Heed her not.

Att. I told and tell thee of Orestes' death.

Elec. Then am I lost. I too am nothing now.

Cly. Look thou to what concerns thee.—Thou,

O Stranger,

Inform me truly by what means he perished?

Att. For this I came, and will relate the whole.

When to the noblest pageant of all Greece

The contest for the Delphian prize, he came,

Soon as he heard the herald's voice aloud

Proclaim the race which ushers in the strife,

Bright he stood forth, by all applauded there.

Scarce seemed the starting-post — so swift his
course—

At distance from the goal ; and victor there

He won th' all-honoured prize. But to compress

In few brief words a long and copious tale,

Such acts of might in man I never knew.

Be this the proof—in all th' accustomed games⁹

⁹ Πεντάθλια—The Πένταθλον, or Quinquertium, consisted of the five games mentioned in the following verse,—

Ἄλμα, ποδωκείην, δίσκον ἄκοντα, πᾶλιν.

Viz. leaping, racing, throwing, darting, wrestling. It may be proper to notice that the Pythian games were not instituted in the age of Orestes. It is said that as often as this play was represented, the Athenians murmured at this anachronism. Yet they suffered it to remain.—The διαυλος here mentioned was when the competitors in the foot-race ran back again to the place from whence they first set out.

To him the umpires gave the conquering crown,
And every wreath his single brow adorned:
Thrice happy then the youth was hailed by all,
When through the host he was proclaimed an Argive,
By name Orestes—Agamemnon's son—
Who roused to war th' embattled power of Greece.
Such was his state—but when the Gods withstand,
No man, though mighty, can escape his doom.
On the next morn, when, with the rising sun,
Began the contest of the winged steeds,
With many practised in the chariot-course,
The lists he entered. An Achæan one,
And one from Sparta; skilled with dextrous hand,
To guide the car, two Lybians next stood forth—
Fifth young Orestes to the contest cheered
His fleet Thessalian mares—the sixth rushed on
With chestnut coursers from Ætolia's land—
The seventh Magnesia sent;—with steeds as white
As spotless snow, the eighth from Ænia came—
From God-erected Athens was the ninth—
And the tenth chariot a Bœotian filled.
Standing where chosen umpires of the strife
Assigned each station, all arranged their cars;
Then at the signal-trumpet bounding forth
Each roused at once his coursers, in his hand

Shaking the reins, and straight the course was filled
 With the hoarse echo of the rattling cars—
 The dust was tossed on high—commingling there
 In wild confusion, none restrained the lash,
 Each ardent to surpass the rolling wheels,
 And snorting coursers of the rival band—
 For on their backs and swift revolving wheels
 Were the hot breathings of the fiery steeds.
 He, to the¹⁰ utmost column keeping close,
 Still drew his axle nigh, and giving rein
 To the right steed, held in the nearer horse.
 All had as yet maintained their course aright,
 But then the Ænian's strong and restive steeds
 Whirl off his chariot, and in turning now,
 The sixth course finished and the seventh com-
 menced,
 Dash their fronts headlong on the Lybian car.
 Then the mischance of one impelled the rest

¹⁰ The chariot-race was not always of the same length—it consisted at different times of four, seven, eight, or twelve courses or rounds. Mr. West fixes this, in which Orestes is said to have contended, at eight. At each round great skill and dexterity was shown in turning the last pillar, the *τέγμα*: this was done by drawing in the reins of the near horse, and giving the other free scope.—Potter.

Each on his fellow ; broke th' encountering cars,
 And strewed their fragments far o'er Crissa's plain.
 This when th' Athenian saw, with skilful hand
 He turned without the wreck—and slacked his speed
 Till, wheeling round, he left it in the midst.
 Last came Orestes, urging in the rear
 His steeds, less swift, yet trusting in the end.
 He, when he saw his rival left alone,
 Sounding the shrill scourge o'er his flying¹ mares
 Pursues him onward, and in equal line
 They sped their course, now one, the other now
 Each urging forward still his horses' heads.
 And all the other courses safely drove
 Th' unhappy, standing in his car erect—
 When, of his wheeling courser slackening now
 The leftward rein, upon the pillar's edge
 Unwarily he struck—while by the shock

¹ Fleet horses are generally spoken of by the Ancient poets in the feminine gender, *πώλους* *ἑνετάς*—Hipp. So Virgil—

Eliadum palmas Epiros equarum.

Georg. i. 59.

Ἴπποι μὲν μέγ' ἄρισται ἔσαν Φηγητιάδαι

Τὰς Ἐυμηλὸς ἔλαυνε—

Hom. Il. ii. 763.

Midway his axle broke, and from his car
 Entangled² in the reins, the youth is hurled,
 While his impatient steeds, now unrestrained
 O'er the mid course their hapless master bore.
 Soon as th' assembly marked him from his car
 O'erthrown, with general cries they mourned the
 youth,
 What glorious deeds—what sad reverse were his,
 Thus whirled on earth, and upward then again,
 Tossing his limbs to heaven.—The charioteers,
 Who scarce could check the fiery coursers' speed,
 Loosed him, so torn and bleeding, that his friends
 Could scarce have recognized his mangled frame.
 And on the pyre they burn him—and the dust
 Of one so mighty in a little urn
 The chosen heralds of the Phocians bear,
 Here to entomb him in his father-land.
 Such is my tale, affecting to relate,
³ But to the sad spectators, of all woes

² Τμητοῖς ἵμασι. Cf. Hipp. (Monk,) 1240.

³ In like manner the Messenger in Œdip. Tyr.

Of these dark deeds
 The worst is latent, since no eye beheld
 Its horrors.—

They e'er beheld, the heaviest and the worst.

Ch. Alas, alas! e'en from its root the race
Of my time-honoured Lords seems withering now.

Cly. Great Jove! what news are these? Call I
 them glad,
Or grievous, though most gainful? I must mourn
By mine own evils to preserve my life.

Att. Why art thou pensive, Lady, at my tale?

Cly. 'Tis much to be a mother;—deeply wronged,
A mother slowly learns to hate her children!

Att. Then, as it seems, we are but come in vain.

Cly. Nay; not in vain; how could'st thou speak
 in vain,
If charged with certain tokens of *his* death?
Who, though I gave him birth, yet, far estranged
From my maternal breast and fostering care,
Hath dwelt, an exile in a foreign clime;
Nor, since he left this land, hath e'er beheld
His mother; but, still laying to my charge
His father's murder, threatened dire revenge;
Hence, nor by night nor day did sleep serene
O'ershade mine eyes, but Time's unvarying round
For ever led me on as doomed to death.
Now, (since to-day from terror I am freed,
I dread nor him nor her, for she hath been

My heavier curse, who, dwelling in my house,
For ever drains my life-blood warm and pure,)
Now shall we spend our future days in peace,
Unvexed, at least, by her unheeded threats.

Elec. Wretch that I am! I now, indeed, have cause
To wail thy doom, Orestes, my beloved,
Thus fallen, and by a mother outraged thus!
Is this well done?

Cly. Not well, in sooth, for thee;—
For him, the doom he met became him well.

Elec. Hear, thou avenger of the recent dead,
Hear, Nemesis!

Cly. Already hath she heard
Whom first she ought, and well fulfilled the prayer.

Elec. Aye, vaunt, for thou art Fortune's minion
now.

Cly. Henceforth nor thou, nor thine Orestes
more,
Subvert our peace.

Elec. Alas! ourselves undone,
We have no power to compass thine undoing.

Cly. Worthy of rich reward hadst thou arrived
O stranger, hadst thou checked her clamorous
tongue.

Att. Then will I hence depart, if this be well.

Cly. Nay, go not thus: unworthy 'twere of us,
Unworthy of the faithful friend who sent thee.
But enter ye, and leave her here without
To mourn her friends' afflictions, and her own.

[*Exeunt* CLYTEMNESTRA and ATTENDANT.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Elec. Did that unnatural mother seem to feel
One pang, to shed one tear, or heave a sigh
O'er her lost son,—so soon, so sadly lost?
She passed within deriding! Wretched me!
Orestes! dear Orestes! by thy death
Thou hast undone me,—thou hast torn away
My last and only hope—that thou would'st come
In life, Avenger of thy father's blood,
And of thy sister's tears!—but whither now
Can I betake me? I am desolate;
Of brother and of father both bereft.
Henceforth, in bitterest bondage must I serve
Those, whom of all mankind I most abhor,
My father's murderers. And can this be well?
O never, never, while I yet survive
Will I with these consort, but at this gate,

Prostrate and friendless, waste my life away.
 If this offend the hated foes within,
 Then let them slay me,—joy it were to die,
 For life is woe, and I would live no more.

STROPHE I.

Ch. ⁴ Where are the vengeful bolts of Jove,
 Or where the beaming sun,
 If deeds like these beholding, still
 Such deeds they calmly hide?

Elec. Ah me! alas! alas!

Ch. Wherefore, my friend, thus wildly weep?

Elec. Woe! woe!

Ch. Nay, do not feed this wild excess of
 grief.

Elec. Alas! thou wilt destroy me!

Ch. Wherefore thus?

Elec. If thou dost talk of idle hopes
 For those, whose dwelling is the dreary grave;

⁴ There is some discussion whether these lines are to be attributed to Electra or to the Chorus. "The reflection," observes Francklin, "comes naturally from the Chorus:"—and though, perhaps, no reason can be assigned why it should come less naturally from Electra, we have followed Erfurdt in attributing it to the Chorus.

To me, by wasting woes consumed,
Thy solace seems but scorn!

ANTISTROPHE.

Ch. Yet ⁵ King Amphiaraus I knew,
By golden-wreathed chains
Of woman was to death ensnared,—
And now beneath the ground—

Elec. Ah! miserable me!

Ch. He reigns immortal evermore.

Elec. Alas!

Ch. Alas, indeed! for most destructive she.

Elec. She was, at length, requited?—

Ch. Even so.

Elec. I know—I know. One rose whose care
Avenged the Monarch's slaughter;—but for me
None, none remains, since he who lived
Is fled for ever now!

⁵ Amphiaraus, being a prophet, and knowing by his art that he should perish at the siege of Thebes, concealed himself, but Eriphyle, his wife, bribed by the present of a necklace, revealed the place of his concealment, and he died as he had foreseen. His death was revenged by his son Alcmaeon, who killed his mother Eriphyle.

STROPHE II.

Ch. Wretched among the comfortless art thou!

Elec. Conscious of this, too conscious must I
be,

In woes so varied, so prolonged,—

In evils dark as hateful plunged!

Ch. How true thy plaints, alas! we know.

Elec. Cease, then, ah cease your vain attempt
To solace,—since no more—

Ch. What would'st thou say?

Elec. Since hope no more
Of succour or of aid can spring
From mine ancestral line.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Ch. Death is the general doom of all mankind.

Elec. What, and must all, like that poor youth,
In the hot strife of ardent steeds,
Be in th' entangling reins involved?

Ch. That sad event was unforeseen.

Elec. How should it not? in foreign clime,
Far from my fostering hand—

Ch. Alas!

Elec. A narrow urn contains him now,
Nor hath he found from me or tomb
Or sad sepulchral dirge!

Enter CHRYSOTHEMIS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Chry. To thee in joy, beloved, am I come,
Dismissing cares of dress, for readier speed.
I bring thee joyous tidings,—hope of rest
From all the ills thou hast deplored so long.

Elec. How shouldst thou bring release from woes
like mine,
From which no respite can be found on earth?

Chry. Learn, this from me, Orestes is at hand,
And know it sure as that thine eyes behold me.

Elec. Art thou, unhappy, to distraction driv'n,
That thou dost mock my miseries and thine own?

Chry. No ; by my father's hearth, I speak not
thus
In scorn,—but of his presence well advised.

Elec. Me miserable ! and who declared to thee
This welcome tale, that wins thine easy faith?

Chry. I learnt it not from strangers ; mine own
eyes
Beheld the tokens that constrained my credence.

Elec. What wakes thy hope, unhappy girl ! what
sight
Inflames thy soul with this unbounded joy ?

Chry. Nay, by the Gods, but hear me ;—when
my tale
Is told, approve me wise, or call me senseless.

Elec. Speak, if the tale can yield thee aught of
pleasure.

Chry. Then will I tell thee all mine eyes have
seen.
Soon as I reached my Father's ancient tomb,
Lo ! o'er the mound I saw ⁶ libations poured
Of freshly-flowing milk ; and, o'er the tomb,
A coronal of every flower that blows :
Astonished at the sight, I gazed around,
Lest one might steal upon me unobserved.
When lone and tranquil I perceived the spot,
Nearer the mound I stole, and o'er the tomb
I saw some locks of fresh-dissevered hair ;

⁶ Here, again, we find funeral offerings without blood.

While pensively I gazed, full on my soul
Rushed the familiar fancy that I saw
Some pledge of him, the dearest of mankind,
The ever-loved Orestes ! In my hands
I raised it ; not ill-omened do I deem
The tears of gladness from mine eyes that fell.
Full well I know that none could offer there
These proofs of fond remembrance, save himself :
To whom, save thee and me, belongs such task ?
I have not done it ; nor, I know full well,
Hast thou ; how could'st thou, who may'st never
leave
These halls unpunished, e'en ⁷ to serve the Gods ?
Such deeds were never in my mother's heart
To do,—nor had she done it undescried.—
Doubtless, these offerings from Orestes came.
Hope, then, beloved sister ! not to these
Shall Fortune ever wear unchanging smiles :
Our former fates were adverse ; but this dawn
Shall usher in, perchance, a brighter day.

⁷ In the religious processions among the Greeks, the virgins, however excluded at other times, bore a conspicuous part ; they walked first, led by some maiden of the highest rank.

Elec. Alas, what madness! How I pity thee!

Chry. And wherefore? Do my words awake no joy?

Elec. Thou know'st not whither range thy wandering thoughts.

Chry. How know I not, at least, what mine own eyes

Have witnessed?

Elec. Wretched sister! he is dead!

Thy hopes from him are vanished; trust no more
To him for succour.

Chry. O unhappy me!
From whom hast thou heard this?

Elec. From one who there
Was present, when he perished.

Chry. Where is he?
I marvel at thy words.

Elec. Within the house—
Welcome, and not displeasing to my mother.

Chry. Ah! woe is me! Yet who, of all mankind,

Could with such offerings grace my father's tomb?

Elec. Some stranger hand, I ween, hath offered
there

The sad memorials of the dead Orestes.

Chry. Unhappy me! in what unbounded joy
I flew to greet thee with the welcome news,
Of my sad doom unconscious! Here arrived,
I find my former woes and fresh afflictions.

Elec. Such is thy state, indeed; yet list to me,
And thou shalt lighten this thy weight of woe.

Chry. Shall I then raise the dead?

Elec. I mean not this
At least—I was not born thus void of sense.

Chry. What bid'st thou then, where I can aught
avail thee?

Elec. That what I counsel thou would'st boldly
act.

Chry. If it can aid us, I will not reject it.

Elec. Remember then, without determined toil
No enterprise can prosper.

Chry. This I know;
And to the task will summon all my powers.

Elec. Hear how I purpose to effect the deed.—
Thou know'st too well no aid is left us now
From friendly hands;—such Death's unsparing
might

Hath rent away, and we are left alone.

I, while I heard that still my brother bloomed
In youth's full vigour, yet indulged a hope

That he would come, Avenger of his sire.
Since now he is no more, I look to thee,
That thou, with me, thy sister, wilt not shrink,
By our own hands, to shed the blood of him
Who shed our father's blood, the vile Ægisthus.
It is no season for concealment now.—
How long wilt thou be slothful?—To what hope
Of refuge canst thou look?—Thou canst but sigh,
Reft of thy father's lordly heritage :—
Thou canst but pine till beauty's vernal bloom
Decay, unwedded still, and unbeloved ;
Ne'er canst thou hope the sacred nuptial tie ;
Thou know'st Ægisthus is not so estranged
From prudence, as to brook that sons should spring
From thee or me, to seek his own destruction.
But, if my prudent counsels thou adopt,
From thy dead father, from thy brother, too,
The praise of pious reverence wilt thou win ;
Then, as in freedom born, wilt thou be styled
For ever free, with worthy nuptials graced,
For all are wont to look on generous deeds.
And seest thou not what never-dying fame,
If thou accede, will grace thy name and mine ?
Whoe'er of citizens or strangers gaze
On us, will greet us with such words as these :—

“ Look on those noble sisters, O my friends,
“ Who on their foes, though screened by regal power,
“ Reckless of life repaid a father's death.
“ These each should love, and these must all revere ;
“ These in the hallowed feasts and popular throng
“ All for their manly courage must extol.”

Thus shall the general voice proclaim our praise,
Alive or dead immortal fame is ours.
Assent, my sister, for thy father's sake,
For thy loved brother's share the arduous toil ;
Release me from mine evils, and release
Thyself with the same blow,—of this assured,
To live in baseness shames the nobly born.

Ch. Much need of caution in a scheme like this
At once to her who speaks, and her who hears.

Chry. Ere thus she spake, O friends, had but
her mind

Been less distracted, she had well preserved
That timely caution which she now contemns.
How couldst thou think in such a wild emprise
To arm thyself, or call on me to aid thee ?
Dost thou not see ? A woman, not a man
Art thou by birth, and weaker than thy foes.
Daily o'er them benignant Fortune smiles,
While we decline, and hourly sink to nothing.

Who then can hope 'gainst such a man to plot,
Nor on themselves severer miseries draw?
Beware, on us lest heavier evils yet
Should fall, if any chance to hear thy words.
Nought will it aid us, nought avail, if crowned
With high renown, in infamy we perish.—
To die is not most hateful—but to long
For death, while death eludes our baffled grasp.
But I conjure thee, ere thou thus persist
To tempt our fall, and desolate our race,
Repress thy wrath :—All thou hast counselled now
A wild unmeaning frenzy will I deem,
And keep in deepest silence. Do but thou
From length of time learn wisdom, and be taught,
Thyself thus weak, to own superior sway.

Ch. Assent. No treasures are to man so rich
As cautious forethought, and a prudent mind.

Elec. Thy words excite no wonder. Well I knew
My proffered counsel thou wouldst wholly spurn.
With mine own hand unaided will I strike
The blow, nor shall it be at least untried.

Chry. Oh had this soul been in thee, when our
sire
Was slain—then might'st thou have accomplished all.

Elec. Such was at least my nature—but my soul

Was more infirm of purpose.

Chry. Through thy life
Be it thy case to cherish such a mood.

Elec. Thou counsel'st thus, as purposed not to
aid me?

Chry. Yes—schemes so ill contrived but ill suc-
ceed.

Elec. I praise thy prudence—for thy dastard fear,
I feel but hatred.

Chry. This I well can bear—
Hereafter thou wilt praise me.

Elec. Ne'er shalt thou
Win praise, at least from me.

Chry. Enough of time
Is yet remaining to decide that question.

Elec. Away—for there is nought of aid in thee.

Chry. There is—but thou dost lack a docile
mind.

Elec. Go, and betray my counsels to thy mother.

Chry. I do not hate thee with such mortal hatred.

Elec. Think then, to what dishonour thou dost
lead me.

Chry. Not to dishonour—to most needful pru-
dence.

Elec. What, must I stoop to follow in the track

Of what thou deemest justice?

Chry. When thy mind
Resumes its wiser mood, I'll follow thee.

Elec. Wondrous, indeed, that one who speaks
so well

Should err from wisdom !

Chry. Thou hast well described
Thine own deluded state.

Elec. And wherefore so—
Do I not seem to counsel thus with justice?

Chry. Justice itself sometimes may lead to ruin.

Elec. I would not deign to live by rules like these.

Chry. Yet, if thou dost it, thou wilt praise my
words.

Elec. Yes—I will do it—undismayed by thee.

Chry. Art thou resolved—or wilt thou yet reflect?

Elec. Than base reflections nought to me more
hateful.

Chry. Methinks thou giv'st no audience to my
words.

Elec. These are no new resolves—nor late con-
strained

By recent wrongs.

Chry. Then I depart at once ;
Neither canst thou endure to praise my words,

Nor I approve thy conduct.

Elec. Aye, depart;—

Never again my counsel shalt thou share,

Though such thy soul desire. 'Tis empty toil

To seek for shadows where no substance dwells.

Chry. If to thyself thy schemes in wisdom framed

Appear, so think;—when ills beset thee round

Too late wilt thou approve my wiser words.

[*Exit* CHRYSOTHEMIS.]

As amidst love, tell discord how testifies

From intercourse of kindred harmony

Since, *Chorus.*

And still, abandoned and alone, is left

Spurning a guerdon STROPHE I.

Why, when we view the feathery tribes of air

⁸ Meet sustenance with duteous love provide

For those who gave them life—whose fostering care

While yet unfledged, their every want supplied;—

Should we from equal piety forbear?

But no—if Themis reigns on high,

And Jove's blue lightnings rend the sky,

Let stern afflictions darkly lower—

⁸ This cannot be predicated of birds in general, as the contrary practice is prevalent among them; it must be a particular allusion to the stork.

Ere long shall vengeance crush the guilty pair!
 O Fame, whose voice can pierce the tomb,
 Bear now for me a plaintive cry,
 Down to the grave, in whose perpetual gloom
 With sad dishonour fraught the famed Atridæ lie!

ANTISTROPHE I.

Say, in their palace wild confusion reigns ;—
 And e'en their children, whom the kindred tie
 Should bind in love, fell discord now restrains
 From intercourse of kindred harmony.
 While sad Electra heaves th' incessant sigh,
 And still, abandoned and alone
 Pours o'er her murdered sire the moan,
 Plaintive as Philomel's wild melody.
 Reckless of death, to life's glad light
 She promptly bids a last farewell,
 So that twin Fury sink to Death's dull night!
 Does not a soul like this her lofty lineage tell?

STROPHE II.

Let stern afflictions darkly lower—

The generous soul recoils from shame,

Nor strains the honours of its name—

As thou, my child, in evil hour

Didst nobly choose, with dauntless mind,
 A life to ceaseless woe consigned ;—
 Waging with guilt eternal war,
 That on thine honoured name might rest
 A double meed—approved by far
 At once the wisest daughter, and the best.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Oh mayst thou live in regal might,
 As much exalted o'er thy foes
 As now immersed in heavier woes !
 Since, though from Glory's envied height
 Plunged deep in ills, I found thee still
 Spurning a guilty tyrant's will ;—
 Found, that in every law divine
 Which blooms with holiest awe above,
 A stedfast piety was thine—
 The love of honour, and the fear of Jove.

Enter ATTENDANT and ORESTES.

ORESTES, ATTENDANT, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Or. Inform us, strangers, have we heard aright,

And will this path direct us where we seek?

Ch. What dost thou ask, and whom desire to find?

Or. Long since I asked where King Ægisthus dwells.

Ch. Right is thy path, and faithful was the guide.

Or. Which then of you will now announce within

The wished arrival of our welcome train?

Ch. If to their race the next in blood allied May do thy bidding best, behold her here.

Or. Go then within, O lady, and report Some strangers, sent from Phocis, seek Ægisthus.

Elec. Unhappy me! they cannot sure arrive With certain proofs of all we lately heard?

Or. What thou hast heard I know not—Strophius old,
Despatched me here with tidings of Orestes.

Elec. What tidings, stranger? How I dread to hear thee!

Or. In the brief compass of this narrow urn We bear the last sad relics of the dead.

Elec. O miserable me! 'Tis now too plain—I see th' undoubted symbols of my woe.

Or. If for Orestes these thy tears are shed,

Know, in this vase repose his poor remains.

Elec. O give me, stranger, give me, by the Gods,
If here indeed his relics are enshrined,
In these sad hands to hold the mournful urn,
That o'er myself, and all my hapless race
With these frail ashes I at once may weep.

Or. Whoe'er she be, bring forth and give the urn,
She does not ask it with a hostile mind—
Some friend perchance, or one of kindred blood.

Elec. Memorial dear of all I loved on earth,
The sole sad relic of Orestes now,
Ah with what different hopes I sent thee forth,
And with what grief receive thee! In my hands
I bear thee—nothing now—yet from these halls,
I sent thee forth, dear boy! in youth's fair bloom.
O had I earlier died, ere with these hands
I stole and sent thee to a foreign land,
And saved thy life from murder's lifted sword—
Thou on that day hadst lain a peaceful corpse,
And shared at least thy father's common tomb.
Now, far from home, and in a stranger-land,
Far from thy sister exiled hast thou died,
Nor my fond hands love's latest task performed,
Nor bathed thy corpse—nor from the flaming pyre
Bore thy sad relics, as beseemed me best;

Unhappy, decked by stranger-hands thou com'st,
 A scanty freight, and in a ⁹narrow urn !
 Alas ! how vain are all mine earlier cares,
 How vain the welcome labours, which for thee
 I oft endured ; for to thy mother's heart
 Thou couldst not have been dearer than to mine.
 Of all within I only was thy nurse,
 And thou didst greet me with a sister's name—
 But now these joys in one sad day are fled—
 With thee retiring : all are swept away
 Swift as the rushing of the winged blast.
 My father is departed—I am lost—
 And thou art with the dead—yet laugh our foes—
 And our vile mother, from a mother's name
 Estranged, is raving with unbridled joy—
 Of whom in secret tidings didst thou pledge
 Thyself the doomed Avenger, soon to come.

⁹ Ἐν σμικρῷ κύτει. Κύτος seems to signify any thing of a circular shape, and so may be applied to an urn. It is used by Æschylus to denote the rim, or outer circumference of a shield.

Οφέων δὲ πλεκτάναισι περίδρομον κύτος
 Προσηδάφισται κοιλυγάστορος κύκλου.

Sept. c. Theb. 491.

Now thy stern fate, and mine, hath torn away
That hope for evermore, which brings me here
When I had thought to clasp thy form beloved,
But lifeless ashes and an empty shade.—
Woe for that breathless corpse—
Woe for that most ill-omened way
Which brought thee hither thus!—
Thou hast undone me, O my dearest brother!
Thou hast indeed undone me! Therefore now
Receive, receive me to thy narrow home.
To thee who now art nothing would I come
Who shall be nothing soon, in the cold grave
Henceforth to dwell together. While in life
I ever shared thy lot, and now in death
I ask but to partake thy sepulchre.

The dead, I see, are grieved no more for ever!

Ch. O think, Electra, mortal was thy sire,
And mortal thine Orestes—let not grief
Transport thee thus—it is our common lot,
The common birthright of our race to suffer.

Or. Alas! what shall I say?—words fail me
—here—

And yet no longer can I check their flow.

Elec. What grief is thine, and wherefore speak'st
thou thus?

Or. Is thine the fair Electra's form renowned?

Elec. It is that form, though worn by many ills.

Or. This is indeed extremity of woe!

Elec. Why, stranger, thus dost thou lament my
doom?

Or. O form by sorrow impiously defaced!

Elec. Such words, O stranger, paint my fate
alone.

Or. Alas, thy life, unwedded and unblest!

Elec. Why, stranger, shouldst thou look upon
my state

With grief like this?

Or. Nought knew I till this hour
Of all my wretchedness.

Elec. How learn'st thou this
From aught that I have uttered?

Or. I behold thee
Conspicuous for thy sorrows.

Elec. Of my ills
The part that meets thine eye is small indeed!

Or. What can be heavier than I now behold?

Elec. I am an inmate with the murderers—

Or. Of whom—what evils dost thou here imply?

Elec. My Father's murderers,—nor is this all—
I am perforce their slave!

Or. Who of mankind
To such a lot constrains thee?

Elec. She is called
My mother—but with that endearing name
No kindred claims!

Or. How doth she wrong thee thus?
By violence or penury?

Elec. By all—
By force—and penury—and all other ills.

Or. And is there none to succour and defend
thee?

Elec. None. One I had, whose ashes thou hast
brought.

Or. Ill-fated! with what pity I behold thee!

Elec. Now, be assured, thou only of mankind
Hast pitied me!

Or. For I alone have come
In sorrow for thine ills.

Elec. And art thou then
With us connected by some kindred tie?

Or. If these around were friendly, I would tell
thee.

Elec. They are; and thou wilt speak before the
faithful.

Or. Give up that urn, that thou may'st learn the whole.

Elec. Nay, stranger, by the Gods, deprive me not Of this sad solace.

Or. To my bidding yield,
And never wilt thou err.

Elec. Nay, as thou bear'st
¹⁰ A manly soul, leave all I hold most dear.

Or. Thou must not keep it—

Elec. Woe is me, Orestes!
If e'en thy tomb is wrested from my hands!

Or. Speak better omens, for thy tears are causeless.

Elec. Can tears, for a dead brother poured,
be causeless?

Or. It ill befits thee to accost him thus.

Elec. And am I then unworthy of the dead?

Or. Of none art thou unworthy—but this part Imports thee not.

Elec. It does—if this sad urn

¹⁰ Literally, “by thy beard.”

Contains the ashes of the loved Orestes.

Or. Not of Orestes, save in specious tale.

Elec. And where then is th' unhappy youth entombed?

Or. He hath no tomb; the living need it not.

Elec. What say'st thou, youth?

Or. I speak no falsehood here.

Elec. And does he live then?

Or. Aye, if I am living!

Elec. And art thou he?

Or. Inspect this ¹ signet well—

¹ Σφραγίς. What this mark was has greatly puzzled the commentators; the Scholiast, whose conjectures are generally whimsical, will needs have it to be some remains of the ivory shoulder of Pelops, (Pind. Olymp. 1.) which was visible in all his descendants, as those of Cadmus were marked with a lance, and the Seleucidæ with an anchor. Camerarius and, after him, Brumoy call it a ring, or seal, which, indeed, is the most natural interpretation of the word σφραγίς; though it may be said in support of the other opinion, that the natural or bodily mark was more certain, and, therefore, a better proof of identity in regard to the person of Orestes.—Francklin. Euripides ascribes the discovery to a scar. It is certain, however, that the proper signification of σφραγίς is a seal, or signet, in which sense it is used in the Trachiniæ, where Deianira sends one as a token to Hercules.

It was my Father's—let it speak my truth.

Elec. O day most welcome!

Or. I attest, most welcome!

Elec. And do I hear thee?

Or. Aye, and none beside.

Elec. Do I indeed embrace thee?

Or. Yea—and thus

In these fond arms mayst thou for ever clasp me!

Elec. O friends, the dearest of my native land,
Ye see, ye see Orestes, late deceased
In art, and now by artifice preserved!

Ch. We see, my daughter—from our eyes the
tears

Of answering rapture gush in copious stream.

STROPHE I.

Elec. Thou offspring dear!

Offspring of him whom most I loved on earth!

At length thou hast arrived,

Found, reached, beheld, whom most thy soul desired.

Or. Yea, we are present;—yet be silent still.

Elec. And wherefore thus?—

Or. Silence is better, lest within they hear us.

Elec. Now by the chaste unconquered Artemis
Thus never will I deign

Meanly to tremble at the woman-crowd,
Which ever dwells within.

Or. Yet see, at least, how martial fire may burn
In woman's breast—for this thyself hast proved.

Elec. Ah miserable me!
Thou dost recall how deep a woe,
Unveiled—incurable—devoid
Of kind oblivion's balm,
Was our sad doom to bear.

Or. This too I know, and, when the crisis calls,
Will prove these deeds are present to our souls.

ANTISTROPHE.

Elec. But every time,
Yes, every time is meet, as it revolves,
To speak of deeds like these—
Scarce can I yet in freedom boldly speak.

Or. I too agree—what then thou hast, preserve.

Elec. And by what means?

Or. When time forbids, indulge not lengthened
speech.

Elec. And who, when thou hast blessed my sight,
such words
For silence could exchange,
Since I behold thee now, beyond all hope,

All promise, thus restored?

Or. Thou saw'st me then, when Heaven inspired
return.

* * * * *

Elec. A more enlivening joy
This word awakes than all I felt before,
If hither Heaven's high will indeed
Impelled thee to return:—
This too from Heaven I deem.

Or. I would not check thy transports, yet I fear,
By joy bewildered, thou wilt swerve from prudence.

EPODE.

Elec. O thou, so long an exile, who hast deigned
Though late, with welcome coming to appear,
Beholding me, long plunged in deepest woes,
Ah do not—

Or. What?

Elec. O do not thou forbid
The transport thus to gaze upon thy form.

Or. A joy is this, which none shall e'er forbid
thee.

Elec. Dost thou assent?

Or. How should I not?

Elec. I, friends beloved, have heard

The welcome news I dared not hope to hear.—
I cherished mute despair,
Nor shrieked in anguish at the first sad tale;
But now I have thee—I behold
That countenance most dear,
Which not in misery could I e'er forget.

Or. Omit th' indulgence of superfluous words,
Nor vainly tell me of my mother's guilt,
Nor how Ægisthus drains my father's store,
Profusely wastes, or idly spends his wealth—
A tale like this would waste th' important hour.
But speak what most may suit our present aim,
Where first appearing, or in ambush where,
We best may quell our proud insulting foes.
Beware too, lest thy mother should detect
Thy brow more joyous, when we pass within,
But, as for that fictitious woe, lament—
When full success hath crowned us, then 'twill be
The time in freedom to exult and laugh.

Elec. Since, O my brother, such is now thy
will,
It shall be mine no less—my present joys
From thee, and not myself, are all derived;
Nor would I cause thee trivial pain, to reap

A great advantage—thus I should not yield
A due obedience to our favouring God.
But all from hence thou know'st—how shouldst thou
not?

Thou know'st Ægisthus is not now within,
But there my mother is—and fear thou not
She should behold my face illumed with smiles,
My inward hatred burns within me still,
Nor, since I have beheld thee, can I cease
From tears of joy.—O how could I forbear,
Who from one journey both believed thee dead
And saw thee living? Yea, thou hast indeed
Surpassed the limit of my wildest hope;
And should my father rise to life, no more
Should I account it wondrous, but believe
That I in truth beheld him. Wherefore then
As in this path thou hast indeed arrived,
Lead as thy soul directs, since I alone
In two things ne'er had failed—or I had freed
Myself with glory, or with glory died.

Or. Silence, I charge thee, for I hear the tread
Of some proceeding from within—

Elec. Go in,

O strangers—tidings do ye bear which none

Might here reject, nor can with joy receive.

Enter ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT, ELECTRA, ORESTES, CHORUS.

Att. O most unwise, of prudence all bereft,
Have ye no lingering thought nor care of life,
And is no inborn caution in your souls,
Unknowing where ye stand, while perils dire
No longer menace, but enclose you round?
Had I not long with timely caution kept
The portal, all your plans within the house
Had been detected, ere yourselves appeared.
But o'er this danger have I promptly watched.
Cease then this long and unavailing speech—
These still insatiate clamours of delight.
Enter within—delay is peril here—
In deeds like this the crisis calls to action.

Or. How, if I enter now, is all within?

Att. Well.—There are none who know thine
aspect there.

Or. Thou hast, as it behoved, announced my
death?

Att. Know, here a man, thou'rt deemed but
ashes there.

Or. Do they exult in this? or what their thoughts?

Att. When all is done, I'll tell thee,—now they
deem

All well within—that most, which is not well.

Elec. Now by the Gods, my brother, who is
this?

Or. Dost thou not know?

Elec. I bear him not in mind.

Or. Know'st thou to whose kind care thy hands
consigned me?—

Elec. To whom? What say'st thou?

Or. By thy timely care

Whose hands conveyed me secretly to Phocis?

Elec. And is this he whom, at my father's death,
Of all our train alone I faithful found?

Or. 'Tis he. Forbear to ask in many words.

Elec. ² O dearest light—the sole preserver thou

² Φῶς. This word is capable of three significations:—1. The day, or light of day, which the ancients were accustomed to address on the reception of any welcome intelligence. 2. The countenance of the old man. 3. The man himself. The first is preferred by Scheffer, who quotes *Philoctetes*, 530.

Of Agamemnon's house, whence hast thou come?
And art thou he who saved from many a woe
My brother and myself? O hands beloved!
O thou whose feet a welcome task fulfilled,
How couldst thou thus delude me, nor reveal
Thy form, but still distract me with thy words,
While yet thy deeds were grateful to my soul?
Hail, O my father, for I seem in thee
To view a second father. Doubly hail!
Know, in this single day, of all mankind
Thee have I most abhorred and most beloved.

Att. Enough for me. Our intervening ills
May be perchance the theme of future days,
And then, Electra, thou shalt hear the whole.
For you who now are present, 'tis the time
To act—now Clytemnestra is alone.
There is no man within—but if ye pause,
Remember well, hereafter must ye fight
With these, and mightier and more numerous foes.

Or. No more of lengthened conference—'tis the
hour,
My Pylades, for action—let us speed
Within, adoring my paternal Gods,
All who within this vestibule abide.

[*Exeunt* ORESTES, PYLADES, and ATTENDANT.]

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Elec. Propitious, King Apollo, hear their prayer;
 Hear mine with theirs, who oft with suppliant
 hand
 Have offered all my scanty store allowed.
 Now then, Lycæan Power, with all I can
 I ask—I kneel—I pray thee. Be to us
 A potent helper in this arduous deed;
 And show to man, what righteous recompense
 Of shameless guilt the vengeful Gods award.

STROPHE I.

Ch. Behold, where breathing blood
 Of deadly strife Mars speeds his onward way;
 The hounds, who mark the guilty for their prey,
 Whom flight can ne'er elude,
 Are entering now the palace; and the cloud
 Of dark suspense, ere long, shall cease my dreams
 to shroud.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Within these halls unseen,
 Halls of his Father's wealth, with silent tread

He steals, the stern Avenger of the dead ;
 And whetted now and keen
 The sword he wields ;—while Hermes points the way,
 His wile in darkness hides, and brooks no more delay.

STROPHE II.

Elec. The warriors, friends beloved, will straight
 perform
 The deed within—meantime in silence wait.

Ch. And how ? what do they ?

Elec. For the funeral now,
 A ³cauldron she prepares—they stand beside.

Ch. And wherefore cam'st thou forth ?

Elec. To watch within,
 Lest, unobserved, Ægisthus should escape.

Cly. Woe ! woe ! I die—I die ! O halls, [*Within.*
 Vacant of friends, and filled with murderous foes !

Elec. One shrieks within—did ye not hear, my
 friends ?

STROPHE III.

Ch. I heard what none should hear,

³ An allusion to the funeral banquet, which was usually spread on the tomb of the deceased by the nearest relation.

And shuddered at the sound.

Cly. Wretch that I am! Ægisthus, where art thou?

Elec. Hark—hark—she shrieks again—

Cly. My son, my son! [Within.
Oh pity her who bare thee!

Elec. Yet on him

Thou hadst no pity—on his father none.

STROPHE IV.

Ch. O city!—O unhappy race!
Now, day by day, death wastes thee, wastes thee
still.

Cly. Ah! I am wounded—

Elec. ⁶Strike, if thou hast power,
A second blow.

Cly. Woe! woe! Again—again!

Elec. Soon may Ægisthus have like cause to
shriek.

⁵ Francklin endeavours to vindicate Electra from the severe censures of the French critics. In excusing Sophocles he has succeeded—but to justify Electra is impossible, even on the plea of fatality.

STROPHE. V.

Ch. The curses are fulfilled—the dead
Entombed in dust revive—
And from their murderers now the copious stream
Of freshly flowing blood
The long-departed drain.

Enter ORESTES and PYLADES.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Elec. Now they are here—each hand is wet with
blood,
First sacrifice to Mars.—What should I say?—

Ch. How hast thou sped, Orestes?

Or. All is well
Within, if Phœbus hath predicted well.

Elec. Is the unhappy dead?

Or. Henceforth no more
Dread thou fresh insults from thy mother's hate.

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ANTISTROPHE III.

Ch. Cease, for I plainly now
Discern Ægisthus near.

Elec. Speed, youths, retire.

Or. Dost thou behold the man
Hastening to us ?

Elec. He from the suburbs comes,
And comes rejoicing

* * * * *

ANTISTROPHE IV.

Ch. Haste—through yon doors that front us—
haste,

Your former deed, in truth, was bravely done—
And now for what remains—

Or. Be confident—
We will achieve it.

Elec. Hasten, if thou'rt wise.

Or. Aye, I am gone.

[*Exeunt* ORESTES, &c.]

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Elec. On me the rest devolves.

ANTISTROPHE V.

Ch. Better, I ween, to lull his ear
 With mildly whispered words;
 That all unheeding, headlong he may plunge
 Into those latent snares
 Which vengeance now hath laid!

Enter ÆGISTHUS.

ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

Æg. Which of you knows where now the
 Phocians are,
 Charged with the tidings of Orestes' death,
 Who perished mid the wrecks of rival cars?
 Thee, thee I ask—whom I so long have found
 Perverse—such news thine interest most import,
 And thou from clearest knowledge canst inform me.

Elec. I know—how should I not? else had I
 been
 Blind to the wreck of all my dearest hopes.

Æg. Inform me, then, where are the strangers
 now?

Elec. Within—for a kind hostess have they found.

Æg. And do they bring sure tidings of the dead?

Elec. To sight they show it, not in words alone.

Æg. Can we, too, prove it by undoubted signs?

Elec. Thou canst—there is a mournful sight within.

Æg. Thy words—not as thou'rt wont—awake my joy.

Elec. Joy then, if such a sight indeed be joyous.

Æg. Command ye silence, and unfold the gates
For Argos and Mycenæ to behold ;—
That, if among them haply some indulge
Vain hopes of his return, they here may see
The breathless corpse, and curb their insolent
speech ;

Ere wisdom to their cost too late they learn,
When our just wrath chastise their bold presumption.

Elec. Now shall my part be done. I too have
learnt

At length the wisdom to revere my Lords.

Æg. ⁵ O Jove, a sight I view that well hath
chanced,

⁵ It was the office of Ægisthus, as a near relative, to

If thus to speak be lawful—but my words,
 If Nemesis be present, I recal.
 Now from the corpse the covering veil remove,
 That I may mourn above my kinsman's bier.

Or. Do thou remove it. 'Tis thy part, not
 mine,

Gazing on this, t' accost it as a friend.

Æg. Nay—but thou counsell'st well, and I obey;—
 Call Clytemnestra, if she be within.

Or. Herself is near thee. Seek her not else-
 where.

Æg. O what a sight is this!

Or. Whom dost thou fear,
 Whom know'st thou not?

Æg. Into th' insidious snares
 Of what false men unhappy have I fallen?

Or. What—seest thou not that they are living
 still

lament over the body of Orestes—on the contrary he expresses an indecent joy; this was an insult to the dead: he recollects himself, and, apprehensive of the vengeance of Nemesis, determines upon a friendly address to the deceased.—
 Potter.

Whom thou wert now addressing as the dead?

Æg. Alas! I know thy meaning—it must be
That he who thus accosts me is himself
The true Orestes.

Or. Most sagacious prophet!—
Thy science failed just now.

Æg. Ah, I am lost—
But let me speak, though brief must be my words.

Elec. Nay, by the Gods, my brother, let him
speak

No more—nor idly lengthen out his words!
How should a brief delay avail the wretch
In ills entangled, and to death consigned?
Be instant death his meed—and give his corpse
To those whose task is to inter the dead,
With rites that suit his crimes, of us unseen.
For all my former injuries this alone
A meet and due atonement do I deem.

Or. Go thou at once within—the contest now
Is not of words—thy life is on the die.

⁵ *Ægisthus* and *Clytemnestra* were buried without the walls, these murderers being thought unworthy of a tomb in the place where *Agamemnon* lay.—Potter, from *Pausanias*.

Æg. Why lead me then within? Why, if the deed

Be done with honour, is there need of darkness?
Is not thy hand e'en now prepared to slay me?

Or. Command not thus, but to the spot proceed
‘Where thou didst shed my murdered father’s blood—
There shall thine own be poured.

Æg. Are then these halls
For ever destined to behold the ills
Of Pelops’ race, the present and the future?

Or. Aye, thine at least,—I am the prophet here.

Æg. But no paternal office dost thou vaunt—

Or. Thou answer’st much to lengthen out the
way—

But haste.—

Æg. Do thou precede.

Or. Thou shalt go first.

Æg. Fear’st thou I should escape thee?

Or. I but fear

‘ This example of retributive justice will remind the reader of a similar instance in holy writ—“ In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.” 1 Kings, xxi. 19.

Lest thou should'st die with pleasure. Duty bids
 That I should keep Death bitter to thy soul :
 And well it were did instant vengeance smite
 The wretch, presuming to transgress the laws,
 For then would villany abound no more.

Ch. O race of Atreus, through what countless
 woes

Hast thou to freedom wrought thine arduous way,
 By this fierce act fulfilled !

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